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Summer No. 5

STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

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THE DARKNESS ON FIFTH AVENUE

by
MURRAY LEINSTER

•
Jules de Grandin
in

THE GODS OF EAST AND WEST

by
SEABURY QUINN

•
Simon Ark in
THE MAN
FROM
NOWHERE

by
EDWARD D. HOCH



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STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, Editor

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The Editor's Page

AS I EXPECTED, my comment on the question of the desirability of establishing a "new writer's" department in this magazine, or our sister publications, *MAGAZINE OF HONOR* and *FAMOUS SCIENCE FICTION*, has brought forth more pleas that we do this. The main trouble is that none of those who seem to think that we ought to do it have offered anything like good reasons for it. What the arguments add up to is, "I think you ought to run such a department because new writers need to be encouraged." Rather than write individual answers to those of you who wrote to this effect, I'll put my answer here: How?

In what way would the installation of a special department for new writers here be *any more* encouraging than the manner in which we have been looking for new writers to encourage all along? Do you mean that we should have such a department just for the sake of publishing a story by some previously-unpublished writer in each issue — regardless of whether the editor feels the story is good enough to publish, whether it meets our minimum requirements at the very least? If you do not mean this, then what do you mean?

Our pages are open to short-short stories (particularly) and some short stories (not so many can be gotten in) no matter what name appears upon them. At the present time, we're well supplied with short stories in excess of the short-short length, and we have a few short-shorts on hand, too. (One was crowded out this time — and doubtless someone who does not like one of the short stories that was included will ask why. Very simple; the way the magazine was fitted together was the only way it could have been fitted together at that particular moment, and time is always of the essence when the proofs come back.)

One reader goes on to the effect that some of the early stories by Lovecraft, Howard, Derleth, etc., weren't so great, so why all this jazz about a newcomer's meeting professional standards? Well, it all depends upon what you mean by "early"; if you mean stories which they couldn't sell until their names were so well-known that some editor was willing to take *anything* with those names on them — obviously, that argument is helpless from the start. If you mean the early stories that *were* accepted and published, the stories through

which these authors gradually built up a following, improving as they went along — the point is that the editors who bought these stories found them "good enough", at least. In other words, at the very least, they *did* conform to the editor's minimum requirements and there was room for them in the magazine; and the editor did want to encourage a new writer.

But the new writer to be encouraged had had to come within a certain distance on his own.

Every editor has his blind spots and his areas of poor taste; allowing for this, he will (if he is able) do what he can to encourage the new writer who he feels is worth taking the time for, *if* his publication has a place for that writer when the newcomer can deliver. I can only guess at this, but my guess is that more editors have lost time trying to help new writers who did not pan out than have lost bets by not seeing a genius in a shabby looking manuscript.

When I first started editing, I tried to be helpful in a number of instances (and succeeded in some, perhaps) but after awhile I learned a very hard lesson. When an author finds an editor who is willing virtually to rewrite a story for him, and then publish it, the hudding author's next manuscript does not show any indication that he has learned anything. He was really trying with the first one; now, instead of applying himself, and taking as much time as he needs to do his homework, he huts out two or three manuscripts in record time and shoots them in to "his editor"; each has the same, or even worse, faults that the first had. *But now he expects the editor to do the writer's job for him.* What started out as a courtesy, or at most a privilege, has become in his mind an inalienable right.

In other instances, editors have tried to "help" new writers by lowering standards and running stories which really needed a good deal more work on them. This is no help at all; all this has done is to persuade the author in question that he has "arrived" and now knows his trade. (Or perhaps the editor in question was so taken by various novelties in the story that he didn't think the defects important enough.) In either event, it's the worst thing that could happen to a writer.

What I have said does not apply 100%; there have been exceptions and doubtless these still exist. They are generalities, meaning that I have seen these things happen often enough to be wary of them. RAWL

The Gods Of East And West

by Seabury Quinn

(author of *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, *The Tenants of Broussac*, etc.)

"TIENS, Friend Trowbridge, you work late tonight."

Jules de Grandin, debonair in faultlessly pressed dinner clothes, a white gardenia sharing his lapel buttonhole with the red ribbon of the Legion d'Honneur, paused at the door of my consulting-room, glimpsed the box of coronas lying upon the table, and straightway entered, seating himself opposite

me and selecting a long, black cigar with all the delighted precision of a child choosing a bonbon from a box of sweets.

I laid aside the copy of Baring's *Diagnosis in Disease of the Blood* I had been studying and helped myself to a fresh cigar. "Have a pleasant time at the Medical Society dinner?" I asked, somewhat sourly.

"But yes," he agreed, nodding

The marks Dr. Trowbridge had made left no doubt — this hideous statue of Koli was growing, day by day . . .

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SEABURY QUINN writes us, in relation to *The Tenants of Broussac*, which we ran last issue, "I recall perfectly writing the story, and remember how Joe Doolin and I worked to put together what we thought would be a satisfactory painting for the cover of WT presenting the story. The *Tenants* was written at a time when I had no idea of making Jules de Grandin the lead character in a series, but Wright practically demanded that I embark on such a series. The result has been very satisfactory to both me and Jules de Grandin."

While we do not feel it sensible to present the history of this series in each issue of *STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES*, it does not seem amiss to inform the new reader that a dozen of de Grandin's adventures appear in a finely-made book published by Mycroft & Moran: Publishers, San Francisco, Wisconsin 53583 @ \$5.00 the copy, and that none of the adventures in the hard-cover edition have been, or will be, reprinted in this magazine.

vigorously while his little blue eyes shone with enthusiasm. "They are a delectable crowd of fellows, those New York physicians. I regret you would not accompany me. There was one gentleman in particular, a full-blooded Indian, who — but you do not listen, my friend; you are *distract*. What is the trouble?"

"Trouble enough," I returned ungraciously. "A patient's dying for no earthly reason that I can see except that she is."

"Ah? You interest me. Have you made a tentative diagnosis?"

"Half a dozen, and none of

'em checks up. I've examined her and re-examined her, and the only thing I'm absolutely certain of is that she's fading away right before my eyes, and nothing I can do seems an earthly bit of good."

"U'm. Phthisis, perhaps?"

"Not a bit of it. I've tested her sputum numerous times; every result is negative. There isn't a thing wrong with her organically, and her temperature is almost always normal, fluctuating slightly at times one way or the other, but hardly ever more than one or two degrees. I've made several blood counts, and while she runs slightly under the million mark, mark, the deficiency isn't enough to cause alarm. About the only objective symptoms she displays are a steady falling off in weight and a progressive pallor, while subjectively she complains of loss of appetite, slight headaches and profound lassitude in the morning."

"U'm," he repeated thoughtfully, expelling a twin cloud of smoke from his narrow nostrils and regarding the ash of his cigar as though it were something of intense interest, "and how long has his condition of affairs obtained?"

"About three months. She's a Mrs. Chetwynde, wife of a likable young chap who's superintending a piece of railway construction for an English company in Burma. He's been

away about six months or so, and while she would naturally be expected to pine for him to some extent — they've been married only a couple of years — this illness has been going on only since about the middle of August."

"Uml! He knocked the ash from his cigar with a deft motion of his little finger and inhaled a great lungful of strong, fragrant smoke with careful deliberation. "This case interests me, Friend Trowbridge. These diseases which defy diagnosis are the things which make the doctor's trade exciting. With your permission I will accompany you when next you visit Madame Chetwynde. Who knows? Together we may find the doormat under which the key of her so mysterious malady lies hidden. Meantime, I furnish for sleep."

"I'm with you," I agreed as I closed my book, shut off the light and accompanied him upstairs to bed.

THE CHETWYNDE cottage was one of the smallest and newest of the lovely little dwellings in the Rockwood section of town. Although it contained but seven rooms, it was as completely a piece of art as any miniature painted on ivory, and the appointments and furnishings comported perfectly with the exquisite architectural artistry of the house. Jules de Grandin's

round little eyes danced delightfully as he took in the perfect harmony existing inside and out when we parked my car before the rose-trellised porch and entered the charming reception hall. "Eh bien, my friend," he whispered as we followed the black-and-white-uniformed maid toward the stairs, "whatever her disease may be, she has the *bon goût* — how do you say? good taste? — this Madame Chetwynde."

Lovely as a piece of Chinese porcelain — and as frail — Ido-line Chetwynde lay on the scented pillows of her Louis Treize bed, a negligee of knife-plaited crepe de chine trimmed with fluffy black marabou shrouding her lissom form from slender neck to slender ankles, but permitting occasional highlights of ivory body to be glimpsed through its sable folds. Little French-heeled mules of scarlet satin trimmed with black fur were on her stockingless feet, and the network of veins showed pale violet against the dead-white of her high-arched insteps. Her long, sharp-chinned face was a rich olive hue in the days of her health, but now her cheeks had faded to the color of old ivory, and her fine, high forehead was as pale and well-nigh as translucent as candle-wax. The long, beautifully molded lips of her expressive mouth were more an

old rose than a coral red; and her large gray eyes, lifted toward the temples like those of an Oriental, shone with a sort of patient resignation beneath the "flying gulf" curve of her intensely black brows. Her hair cut short as a boy's at the back, had been combed across her forehead from right to left and plastered down with some perumunguent so that it surmounted her white face like a close-wrapped turban of gleaming ebony silk. Diamond studs, small, but very brilliant, flickered lamely in the lobes of her low-set ears. Some women cast the aura of their feminine allure about them as a bouquet of roses exudes its perfume. Ido-line Chetwynde was one of these.

"Not so well this morning, thank you, Doctor," she replied to my inquiry. "The weakness seems greater than usual, and I had a dreadful nightmare last night."

"Humph, nightmare, eh?" I answered gruffly. "We'll soon attend to that. What did you dream?"

"I — I don't know," she replied languidly, as though the effort of speaking was almost too much for her. "I just remember that I dreamed something awful, but what it was I haven't the slightest notion. It really doesn't matter, anyway."

"Pardonnez-moi, Madame, but matters extremely much," de

Grandin contradicted. "These things we call dreams, they are sometimes the expression of our most secret thoughts; through them we sometimes learn things concerning ourselves which we should not otherwise suspect. Will you try to recall this unpleasant dream for us?"

AS HE SPOKE he busied himself with a minute examination of the patient, tapping her patellar tendons, feeling along her wrists and forearms with quick, practiced fingers, lifting her lids and examining the pupils of both her luminous eyes, searching on her throat, neck and cardiac region for signs of abrasions. "Eh bien," and "morbide, c'est étrange!" I heard him mutter to himself once or twice, but no further comment did he make until he had completed his examination.

"Do you know, Dr. Trowbridge," Mrs. Chetwynde remarked as de Grandin rolled down his cuffs and scribbled a memorandum in his notebook, "I've been gone over so many times I've begun to feel like an entry at the dog show. It's really not a bit of use, either. You might just as well save yourselves and me the trouble and let me die comfortably. I've a feeling I shan't be here much longer anyway, and it might be better for all concerned if . . ."

"Zut!" de Grandin snapped the elastic about his pocketbook

with a sharp report and leveled a shrewd, unwinking stare at her. "Say not so, *Madame*. It is your duty to live. *Parbleu*, the garden of the world is full to suffocation with weeds; flowers like yourself should be most sedulously cultivated for the joying of all mankind."

"Thank you, Doctor," Mrs. Chetwynde smiled slowly in acknowledgment of the compliment and pressed the ebony-and-silver rbell which hung over the ornamental head of her bed.

"*Madame* has called?" The swart-visaged maid-servant appeared at the door of the chamber with a promptitude which led me to suspect her ear had never been far from the keyhole.

"Yes, Dr. Trowbridge and Dr. de Grandin are leaving," her mistress replied in a tired voice.

"*Adieu, Madame*," de Grandin murmured in farewell, leaning forward and possessing himself of the slender hand our hostess had not troubled to lift as we turned to go. "We go, but we shall return anon, and with us, unless I greatly mistake, we shall bring you a message of good cheer. No case is hopeless until . . ."

"Until the undertaker's been called?" Mrs. Chetwynde interrupted with another of her slow tired smiles as the little Frenchman pressed his lips to her pale fingers and turned to accompa-

ny the maid and me from the room.

"Be careful — sir," the maid cautioned, with just enough space between the command and the title of courtesy to rob her utterance of all semblance of respect. De Grandin, turning from the stairs into the hall, had almost collided with a statuette which stood on a pedestal in a niche between the staircase and the wall. To me it seemed the woman bent a look of almost venomous hate on him as he regained his footing on the highly polished floor and wheeled about to stare meditatively at the figurine into which he had nearly stumbled.

"This way — if you please, sir," the servant admonished, standing by the front door and offering his hat in a most suggestive manner.

"Ah, yes, just so," he agreed, turning from the statue to her, then back again. "And do you suffer from the mosquitoes here at this time of year, *Mademoiselle*?"

"Mosquitoes?" the woman's reply was half word, half scornful sniff at the little foreigner's irrelevant remark.

"Precisely, the mosquito, the gnat, the *moustique*," he rejoined with a humorous lift of his brows. "The little, buzzing pests, you know."

"No, sir!" The answer served notice there was no more to be said on the subject.

"Ah? Perhaps it is then that *Madame* your mistress delights in the incense which annoys the moths, yes?"

"No, sir!"

"*Parbleu, ma vierge*, there are many strange things in the world, are there not?" he returned with one of his impish grins. "But the strangest of all are those who attempt to hold information from me."

THE SERVANT'S only reply was a look which indicated clearly that murder was the least favor she cared to bestow on him.

"*La, la*," he chuckled as we descended the steps to my car. "I did her in the eye, as the Englishmen say, that time, did not, my friend?"

"You certainly had the last word," I admitted wonderingly. "but you'll have to grant her the last look, and it was no very pleasant one, either."

"*Ah bah*," he returned with another grin, "who cares how old pickleface looks so long as her looks reveal that which I seek? Did not you notice how she stiffened when I hinted at the odor of incense in the house? There is no reason why they should not burn incense there, but, for some cause, the scent is a matter of utmost privacy — with the maid, at least."

"Um?" I commented.

"Quite right, my friend, your objection is well taken," he re-

sponded with a chuckle. "Now tell me something of our fair patient. Who is she, who were her forebears, how long has she resided here?"

"She's the wife of Richard Chetwynde, a naturalized Englishman, who's been working on an engineering job in India, as I told you last night," I replied. "As to her family, she was a Miss Millatone before her marriage, and the Millatones have been here since the Indians — in fact, some of them have been here quite as long, since an ancestress of hers was a member of one of the aboriginal tribes — but that was in the days when the Swedes and Dutch were contending for this part of the country. Her family is more than well to do, and . . ."

"No more, my friend; you have told me enough, I think," he interrupted. "That strain of Indian ancestry may account for something which has caused me much wonderment. *Madame* Chetwynde, is a rarely beautiful woman, my friend, but there is that indefinable something about her which tells the careful observer her blood is not entirely Caucasian. No disgrace, that; *parbleu*, a mixture of strain is often an improvement of the breed, but there was a certain — how shall I say it? — foreignness about her which told me she might be descended from Orientals, perhaps; per-

at it, an' ye can belave me or not, Doctor, hut th' thing had growed half a foot since last time I seen it!"

"Indeed?" de Grandin responded politely. "And then . . ."

"Then I sez to meself, sez I, 'I'll jist fix you, me beauty, that I will,' an' th' next evenin', when no one wuz lookin', I sneaked in to th' hall an' doused th' thing 'wid howly wather from th' church font!"

"Ah? And then . . .?" de Grandin prompted gently, his little eyes gleaming with interest.

"Ouch, Doctor darlin', if I hadn't seen it I wouldn't a' belaved it! May I niver move off'n this spot if th' blessed wather didn't boil an' stew as if I'd poured it onto a red-hot sthovel!"

"*Parbleu!*" the Frenchman murmured.

"Th' next time I went past th' thing, so help me hivin, if it didn't grin at me!"

"*Mordieu*, do you say so? And then . . .?"

"An' no longer ago than yesterday it wunk its eye at me as I went by!"

"And you did say something concerning Madame Chetwynde praying to this . . ."

"Doctor" — the woman sidled nearer and took his lapel between her thumb and forefinger — "Doctor, 'tis meself as knows better than to bear tales concernin' me betterers, hut I seen sumpin last week that give me th' cowl'd shivers from me big

toes to me eye-teeth. I'd been shlapin' as peaceful as a lamb that hadn't been born yet, when all of a sudden I heard sumpin downstairs that sounded like burgulars. 'Bad cess ter th' murderin' scoundrils,' says I, 'comin' here to kill pore defenseless women in their beds!' an' wid that I picks up a piece o' iron pipe I found handy-like heside me door an' shtarts ter crape downstairs ter lane it agin th' side o' their heads.

"Dr. de Grandin, sor, 'tis th' blessed truth an' no lie I'm tellin' ye. When I come to th' head o' th' sheeps, there was Mrs. Chetwynde, all harefooty, wid some sort o' funny-lookin' thing on her head, a-lightin' hay then punk-sticks before that black haythen image an' a-goin' down on her two knees to it!"

"Katy Hooney, sez I to meself, 'this is no fit an' proper house fer you, a Christian woman an' a good Catholic, to be livin' in, so it's not,' an' as soon as iver I could I give me notice to Mrs. Chetwynde, an' all th' money in th' mint couldn't hire me to go back to that place agin, sor."

"Just so," the little Frenchman agreed, nodding his sleek blond head vigorously. "I understand your reluctance to return; but could you not be induced by some consideration greater than money?"

"Sure, an' I'd not go back there fer . . ." Katy began, but

he cut her short with a sudden gesture.

"Attend me, if you please," he commanded. "You are a Christian woman, are you not?"

"To be sure, I am."

"Very good. If I told you your going back to Madame Chetwynde's service until I give you word to leave might be instrumental in saving a Christian soul—a Christian hody, certainly — would you undertake the duty?"

"I'd do most annything ye towld me to, sor," the woman replied soberly, "but th' blessed saints know I'm afear'd to shapel under th' same roof wid that there black thing another night."

"Um," de Grandin took his narrow chin in his hand and bowed his head in thought a moment, then turned abruptly toward the door. "Await me here," he commanded. "I shall return."

LESS THAN two minutes later he re-entered the kitchen, a tiny package of tissue paper, bound with red ribbon, in his hand. "Have you ever been by the Killarney lakes?" he demanded of Katy, fixing his level, unwinking stare on her.

"Sure, an' I have that," she replied fervently. "More than once I've sthooed beside th' hlue wathers an' . . ."

"And who is it comes out of the lake once each year and rides across the water on a great white

horse, attended by . . ." he began, but she interrupted with a cry that was almost a scream of ecstasy:

"Tis th' O'Donohue himself! Th' brave O'Donohue, a-ridin' his grate white harse, an' a-headin' his hand o' noble Fay-neans, all ridin' an' prancin' ter set owld Ireland free!"

"Precisely," de Grandin replied. "I, too, have stood beside the lake, and with me have stood certain good friends who were born and bred in Ireland. One of those once secured a certain souvenir of the O'Donohue's yearly ride. Behold!"

Undoing the tissue paper parcel he exhibited a tiny ring composed of two or three strands of white horsehairs loosely plaited together. "Suppose I told you these were from the tail of the O'Donohue's horse?" he demanded. "Would you take them with you as a safeguard and re-enter Madame Chetwynde's service until I gave you leave to quit?"

"Glory be, I would that, sor!" she replied. "Faith, wid three hairs from th' O'Donohue's horse, I'd take service in th' Devil's own kitchen an' hrew him as foine a broth o' brimstone as iver he drank, that I would. Sure, th' O'Donohue is more than a match fer any murderin' haythen that iver came out o' India, I'm thinkin', sor."

"Quite right," he agreed with a smile. "It is understood, then, that you will return to Madame

haps from the Turk, the Hindoo, the . . .

"No," I cut in with a chuckle, "she's what you might call a hundred and ten percent American."

"U'm," he commented dryly, "and therefore ten percent nearer the bare verities of nature than the thinner-blooded European. Yes, I think we may win this case, my friend, but I also think we shall have much study to do."

"Oh" — I looked at him in surprise — "so you've arrived at a hypothesis?"

"Hardly that, my friend. There are certain possibilities, but as yet Jules de Grandin has not the courage to call them probabilities. Let us say no more for the time being, I would think, I would cogitate, I would meditate upon the matter." Nor could all my urging extract a single hint concerning the theory which I knew was humming like a gyroscope inside his active little brain as we drove home through the rows of brilliant maple trees lining the wide streets of our pretty little city.

A SPIRITED altercation was under way when we arrived at my house. Taking advantage of the fact that office hours were over and no patients within earshot, Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, was engaged in the pleasing pastime of expressing her unvarnished opin-

ion with all the native eloquence of a born Irishwoman. "Take shame to yerself, Katy Rooney," she was advising her niece as de Grandin and I opened the front door, "sure, 'tis yerself as ought to be ashamed to set foot in me kitchen an' tell me such nonsense! Afther all th' doctor's been afther doin' for yez, too! Desertin' th' pore lady while she's sick an' in distress, ye are an' without so much as sayin' hy yer lave to th' doctor. Wurr-a, 'tis Nora McGinnis that's strainin' ivery nerve in her body to kape from takin' her hand off th' side o' yer face!"

"Take shame ter meself, in-dade!" an equally belligerent voice responded. "'Tis little enough ye know of th' goin's on in that there house! S'posin' 'twas you as had ter live under th' same roof wid a hay-then statchoo, an see th' misthress ye wuz takin' yer wages from a-crawlin' on her hands an' knees before th' thing as if she was a haythen or a Protestant or sumpin, instid of a Christian woman! When first I come to Missis Chetwynde's house th' thing was no larger nor th' span o' me hand, an ivery day it's growed an' growed until it's as long as me arm this minit, so it is, an' no longer ago than yes-tiddy it wunk its haythen eye at me as I was passin' through th' hall. I tell ye, Nora darlin', what wid that black statchoo a-standin' in th' hall an' gittin

bigger an' bigger day be day, an' th' missis a-crawlin' to it on her all-fours, an' that slinky, sneaky English maid o' her'n actin' as if I, whose ancistors wuz kings in Ireland, wuz no better than th' dirt benathe her feet, an' belike not as good, I'd not be answerable fer me actions another day—th' saints bear me when I say it!"

I was striding toward the kitchen with intent to bring the argument to an abrupt close when de Grandin's fingers suddenly bit into my arm so sharply that I winced from the pressure. "No, no, Friend Trowbridge," he whispered fiercely in my ear, "let us bear what else she has to say. This information is a gift from beaven, no less!" Next moment he was in the kitchen, smiling ingratiatingly at the two angry women.

"Dr. de Grandin, sor," began Nora, anxious to refer the dispute to his arbitration, "tis me-self that's ashamed to have to own this gurrul as kin o' mine. When Mrs. Chetwynde wuz taken sick, Dr. Trowbridge got her to go over an' cook fer th' pore lady, fer all our family's good cooks, though I do say it as shouldn't. An' now, bad cess to her, she's fer up an' lavin' th' pore lady in th' midst of her trouble, like as if she were a Scandinavian or Eyetalian, or some kind o' stinkin' furriner, beggin' yer pardon, sor."

"Faith, Doctor," the accused Kathleen answered in defense, "I'm niver th' one to run out from a good situation widout warnin', but that Chetwynde house is no Christian place at all, at all. 'Tis some kind o' hay-then madhouse, no less."

DE GRANDIN regarded her narrowly a moment, then broke into one of his quick smiles. "What was it you did say concerning a certain statue and Madame Chetwynde?" he asked.

"Sure, an' there's enough ter say," she replied, "but th' best part of it's better left unsaid, I'm thinkin'. Mrs. Chetwynde's husband, as belike you know, sor, is an engineer in India, an' he's forever sendin' home all sorts o' furrin knickknacks fer souvenirs. Some o' th' things is reel pretty an' some o' 'em ain't so good. It wuz about three months ago, just before I came wid her, he sent home th' statchoo of some old haythen goddess from th' furrin land. She set it up on a pedistal like as if it were th' image of some blessed saint, an' there it stands to this day, a-poisoinin' th' pure air o' th' entire house."

"I niver liked th' looks o' th' thing from th' first moment I clapped me two eyes on it, but I didn't have ter pass through th' front end o' th' house much, an' when I did I turned me eyes away, hut one day as I was passin' through th' hall I looked

Chetwynde's this afternoon and remain there until you hear further from me? Very good."

To me, as we returned to the front of the house, he confided: "A pious fraud is its own excuse, Friend Trowbridge. What we believe a thing is, it is, as far as we are concerned. Those hairs, now, I did extract them from the mattress of my bed; but our superstitious Katy is brave as a lion in the belief that they came from the O'Donohue's horse."

"Do you mean to tell me you actually take any stock in that crazy Irishwoman's story, de Grandin?" I demanded incredulously.

"*Eh bien*," he answered with a shrug of his narrow shoulders, "who knows what he believes, my friend? Much she may have imagined, much more she may have made up from the activity of her superstitious mind; but if all she said is truth I shall not be so greatly surprised as I expect to be before we have finished this case."

"Well!" I returned, too amazed to think of any adequate reply.

"TROWBRIDGE, my friend," he informed me at breakfast the following morning. "I have thought deeply upon the case of Madame Chetwynde, and it is my suggestion that we call upon the unfortunate lady without further delay. There are several things I should very much like

to inspect in her so charming house, for what the estimable Katy told us yesterday has thrown much light on things which before were entirely dark."

"All right," I assented. "It seems to me you're taking a fantastic view of the case, but everything I've done thus far has been useless, so I dare say you'll do no harm by your tricks."

"*Morbleu*, I warrant I shall not!" he agreed with a short nod. "Come, let us go."

The dark-skinned maid who had conducted us to and from her mistress the previous day met us at the door in answer to my ring and favored de Grandin with an even deeper scowl than she had shown before, but she might as well have been a graven image for all the attention he bestowed on her. However:

"*Mon Dieu*, I faint, I am ill, I shall collapse, Friend Trowbridge!" he cried in a choking voice as we approached the stairs. "Water, I pray you; a glass of water, if you please!"

I turned to the domestic and demanded a tumbler of water, and as she left to procure it, de Grandin leaped forward with a quick, catlike movement and pointed to the statuette standing at the foot of the stairs. "Observe it well, Friend Trowbridge," he commanded in a low, excited voice. "Look upon its hideousness, and take par-

ticular notice of its height and width. See, place yourself here, and draw a visual line from the top of its head to the woodwork behind, then make a mark on the wood to record its stature. Quick, she will return in a moment, and we have no time to lose!"

Wonderingly, I obeyed his commands, and had scarcely completed my task when the woman came with a goblet of ice-water. De Grandin pretended to swallow a pill and wash it down with copious drafts of the chilled liquid, then followed me up the stairs to Mrs. Chetwynde's room.

"*Madame*," he began without preliminary when the maid had left us, "there are certain things I should like to ask you. Be so good as to reply, if you please. First, do you know anything about the statue which stands in your hallway below?"

A troubled look flitted across our patient's pale face. "No, I can't say I do," she replied slowly. "My husband sent it back to me from India several months ago, together with some other curios. I felt a sort of aversion to it from the moment I first saw it, but somehow it fascinated me, as well. After I'd set it up in the hall I made up my mind to take it down, and I've been on the point of having it taken out half a dozen times, but somehow I've never been able to make up my mind about

it. I really wish I had, now, for the thing seems to be growing on me, if you understand what I mean. I find myself thinking about it — it's so adorably ugly, you know — more and more during the day, and, somehow, though I can't quite explain, I think I dream about it at night, too. I wake up every morning with the recollection of having had a terrible nightmare the night before, but I'm never able to recall any of the incidents of my dream except that the statue figures in it somehow."

"Um?" de Grandin murmured noncommittally. "This is of interest, *Madame*. Another question, if you please, and, I pray you, do not be offended if it seems unduly personal. I notice you have a *penchant* for attar of rose. Do you employ any other perfume?"

"No," wonderingly. "No incense, perhaps, to render the air more fragrant?"

"No, I dislike incense, it makes my head ache. And yet" — she wrinkled her smooth brow in a puzzled manner — "and yet I've thought I smelled a faint odor of some sort of incense, almost like Chinese punk, in the house more than once. Strangely enough, the odor seems strongest on the mornings following one of my unremembered nightmares."

"H'm," de Grandin muttered, "I think, perhaps, we begin to see a fine, small ray of light.

Thank you, *Madame*; that is all."

"THE MOON is almost at the full, Friend Trowbridge," he remarked apropos of nothing, about 11 o'clock that night. "Would it not be an ideal evening for a little drive?"

"Yes, it would not," I replied. "I'm tired, and I'd a lot rather go to bed than be gallivanting all over town with you, but I suppose you have something up your sleeve, as usual."

"*Mais oui*," he responded with one of his impish smiles, "an elbow in each, my friend—and other things, as well. Suppose we drive to Madame Chetwynde's."

I grumbled, but complied.

"Well, here we are," I growled as we passed the Chetwynde cottage. "What do we do next?"

"Go in, of course," he responded.

"Go in? At this hour of night?"

"But certainly; unless I am more mistaken than I think, there is that to be seen within which we should do well not to miss."

"But it's preposterous," I objected. "Who ever heard of disturbing a sick woman by a call at this hour?"

"We shall not disturb her, my friend," he replied. "See, I have here the key to her house. We shall let ourselves in like a pair of wholly disreputable burglars and dispose ourselves as comfortably as may be to see what

we shall see, if anything."

"The key to her house!" I echoed in amazement. "How the deuce did you get it?"

"Simply. While the sour-faced maid fetched me the glass of water this morning, and you did observe the statue, I took an impression of the key, which I did notice yesterday, in a cake of soap I had brought for that very purpose. This afternoon I had a locksmith prepare me a duplicate from the stamp I had made. *Parbleu*, my friend, Jules de Grandin has not served these many years with the *Surete* and failed to learn more ways than one of entering other peoples' houses!"

Quietly, treading softly, we mounted the veranda steps, slipped the Judas-key into the front door lock and let ourselves into Mrs. Chetwynde's hall. "This way, if you please, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin ordered, plucking me by the sleeve. "If we seat ourselves in the drawing-room we shall have an uninterrupted view of both stairs and hall, yet remain ourselves in shadow. That is well, for we have come to see, not to be seen."

"I feel like a malefactor . . ." I began in a nervous whisper, but he cut me off sharply.

"Quiet!" he ordered in a low breath. "Observe the moon, if you please, my friend. Is it not already almost peering through yonder window?"

I GLANCED toward the hall window before which the black statuette stood and noticed that the edge of the lunar disk was beginning to show through the opening, and long silver beams were commencing to stream across the polished floor, illuminating the figure and surrounding it with a sort of cold effulgence. The statue represented a female figure, gnarled and knotted, and articulated in a manner suggesting horrible deformity. It was of some kind of black stone or composition which glistened as though freshly anointed with oil, and from the shoulder-sockets three arms sprang out to right and left. A sort of pointed cap adorned the thing's head, and about the pendulous breasts and twisting arms serpents twined and writhed, while a girdle of skulls, carved from gleaming white bone, encircled its waist. Otherwise it was nude, and nude with a nakedness which was obscene even to me, a medical practitioner for whom the human body held no secrets. As I watched the slowly growing patch of moonlight on the floor it seemed the black figure grew slowly in size, then shrank again, and again increased in stature, while its twisting arms and garlands of contorting serpents appeared to squirm with a horrifying suggestion of waking into life.

I blinked my eyes several times, sure I was the victim of

some optical illusion due to the moon rays against the silhouette of the statue's blackness, but a sound from the stairhead brought my gaze upward with a quick, startled jerk.

Light and faltering, but unquestionably approaching, a soft step sounded on the uncarpeted stairs, nearer, nearer, until a tall, slow-moving figure came into view at the staircase turn. Swathed from breast to insteps in a diaphanous black silk night-robe, a pair of golden-strapped boudoir sandals on her little naked feet and a veil of black tulle shrouding her face, Idoline Chetwynde slowly descended the stairs, feeling her way carefully, as though the covering on her face obscured her vision. One hand was outstretched before her, palm up, fingers close together; in the other she bore a cluster of seven sticks of glowing, smoking Chinese punk spread fanwise between her fingers, and the heavy, cloyingly sweet fumes from the joss-sticks spiraled slowly upward, surrounding her veiled head in a sort of nimbus and trailing behind her like an evil-omened cloud.

Straight for the black image of the Indian goddess she trod, feeling each slow, careful step with faltering deliberation, halted a moment and inclined her head, then thrust the punk-sticks into a tiny bowl of sand which stood on the floor at the

statue's feet. This done, she stepped back five slow paces, slipped the gilded sandals off and placed her bared feet parallel and close together, then with a sudden forward movement dropped to her knees. Oddly, with that sense for noting trifles in the midst of more important sights which we all have, I noticed that when she knelt, instead of straightening her feet out behind her with her insteps to the floor, she bent her toes forward beneath her weight.

FOR AN instant she remained kneeling upright before the black image, which was already surrounded by a heavy cloud of punk-smoke; then, with a convulsive gesture, she tore the veil from before her face and rent the robe from her bosom, raised her hands and crossed them, palms forward, in front of her brow and bent forward and downward till crossed hands and forehead rested on the waxed boards of the floor. For a moment she remained thus in utter self-abasement, then rose upright, flinging her hands high above her head, recrossed them before her face and dropped forward in complete prostration once more. Again and again she repeated this genuflection, faster and faster, until it seemed her body swayed forward and back thirty or forty times a minute, and the soft pat-pat of her hands against the floor assumed a

rhythmic, drumlike cadence as she began a faltering chant in eager, short-breathed syllables:

Ho, Devi, consort of Siva and daughter of Himavati!
Ho, Sakti, fructifying principle of the Universe!
Ho, Devi, the Goddess;
Ho, Gauri, the Yellow;
Ho, Uma, the Bright;
Ho, Durga, the Inaccessible;
Ho, Chandī, the Fierce;
Listen Thou to my Mantra!
Ho, Kali, the Black,
Ho, Kali, the Six-armed One of Horrid Form,
Ho, Thou about whose waist hangs a girdle of human skulls as if it were a precious pendant;
Ho, Malign Image of Destructiveness—

She paused an instant, seeming to swallow rising trepidation, gasped for breath a moment, like a timid but determined bather about to plunge into a pool of icy water, then:

Take Thou the soul and the body of this woman prostrate before Thee,
Take Thou her body and her spirit, freely and voluntarily offered,
Incorporate her body, soul and spirit into Thy godhead, to strengthen Thee in Thine undertakings.
Freely is she given Thee, Divine Destroyer.
Freely, of her own accord, and without reservation,
Asking naught but to become a part of Thee and of Thy supreme wickedness.

Ho, Kali of horrid form,
Ho, Malign Image of Destructiveness,
Ho, eater-up of all that is good,
Ho, disseminator of all which is wicked,
Listen Thou to my Mantra!

"Grand Dieu, forgive her invincible ignorance; she knows not what she says!" de Grandin muttered beside me, but made no movement to stop her in her sacrilegious rite.

I half rose from my chair to seize the frenzied woman and drag her from her knees, but he grasped my elbow in a vise-like grip and drew me back savagely. "Not now, foolish one!" he commanded in a sibilant whisper. And so we watched the horrid ceremony to its close.

FOR UPWARD of a quarter-hour, Idoline Chetwynde continued her prostrations before the beathen idol, and, either because the clouds drifting across the moon's face played tricks with the light streaming through the hall window, or because my eyes grew undependable from the strain of watching the spectacle before me, it seemed as though some hovering, shifting pall of darkness took form in the corners of the room and wavered forward like a sheet of wind-blown sable cloth until it almost enveloped the crouching woman, then fluttered back again. Three or four times I noted this phenomenon, then as I was almost sure it was no trick of lighting or imagination, the moon, sailing serenely in the autumn sky, passed beyond the line of the window, an even tone of shadow once more filled

the hall, and Mrs. Chetwynde sank forward on her face for the final time, uttered a weak, protesting little sound, halfway between a moan and a whimper, and lay there, a lifeless, huddled heap at the foot of the graven image, her white arms and feet protruding from the black folds of her robe and showing like spots of pale light against the darkness of the floor.

Once more I made to rise and take her up, but again de Grandin restrained me. "Not yet, my friend," he whispered. "We must see the tragic farce played to its conclusion."

For a few minutes we sat there in absolute silence; then, with a shuddering movement, Mrs. Chetwynde regained consciousness, rose slowly and dazedly to her feet, resumed her sandals, and walked falteringly toward the stairs.

Quick and silent as a cat, de Grandin leaped across the room, passed within three feet of her and seized a light chair, thrusting it forward so that one of its spindle legs barred her path.

Never altering her course, neither quickening nor reducing her shuffling walk, the young woman proceeded, collided with the obstruction, and would have stumbled had not de Grandin snatched away the chair as quickly as he had thrust it forward. With never a backward look, with no exclamation of pain — although the contact must

have hurt her cruelly — without even a glance at the little Frenchman who stood half an arm's length from her, she walked to the stairs, felt for the bottommost tread a second, then began a slow ascent.

"*Tres bon!*" de Grandin muttered as he restored the chair to its place and took my elbow in a firm grip, guiding me down the hall and through the front door.

"What in heaven's name does it all mean?" I demanded as we regained my car. "From what I've just seen I'd have no hesitancy in signing commitment papers to incarcerate Mrs. Chetwynde in an institution for the insane — the woman's suffering from a masochistic mania, no doubt of it — but why the deuce did you try to trip her with a chair?"

"Softly, my friend," he replied, touching fire to a vile-smelling French cigarette and puffing furiously at it. "Did you help commit that poor girl to an insane asylum you would be committing a terrible crime, no less. Normal she is not, but her abnormality is entirely subjective. As for the chair, it was the test of her condition. Like you, I had a faint fear her actions were due to some mental breakdown, but did you notice her walk? *Parbleu*, was it the walk of a person in possession of his faculties? I say no! And the chair proved it,

though it must have caused her tender body much pain, she neither faltered nor cried out. The machinery which telegraphed the sensation of hurt from her leg to her brain did suffer a short-circuit. My friend, she was in a state of complete anesthesia as regarded the outward world. She was, how do you say . . ."

"Hypnotized?" I suggested.

"Um, perhaps. Something like that; although the controlling agent was one far, far different from any you have seen in the psychological laboratory, my friend."

"Then . . ."

"Then we would do well not to speculate too deeply until we have more pieces of evidence to fit into the picture-puzzle of this case. Tomorrow morning we shall call on Madame Chetwynde, if you please."

WE DID. The patient was markedly worse. Great lavender circles showed under her eyes, and her face, which I had thought as pale as any countenance could be in life, was even a shade paler than theretofore. She was so weak she could hardly lift her hand in greeting, and her voice was barely more than a whisper. On her left leg, immediately over the fibula, a great patch of violet bruise showed plainly the effects of her collision with the chair. Throughout the pretty, cozy little cot-

tage there hung the faint aroma of burnt joss-sticks.

"Look well, my friend," de Grandin ordered in a whisper as we descended the stairs; "observe the mark you made behind the statue's head no later than yesterday."

I paused before the horrid thing, closed one eye and sighted from the tip of its pointed cap to the scratch I had made on the woodwork behind it. Then I turned in amazement to my companion. Either my eye was inaccurate or I had made incorrect measurements the previous day. According to yesterday's marks on the woodwork the statue had grown fully two inches in height.

De Grandin met my puzzled look with an unwavering stare, as he replied to my unspoken question: "Your eye does not deceive you, my friend; the hell-hag's effigy has enhanced."

"But — but," I stammered, "that can't be!"

"Nevertheless, it is."

"But, good heavens, man; if this keeps up . . ."

"This will not keep up, my friend. Either the devil's dam takes her prey or Jules de Grandin triumphs. The first may come to pass; but my wager is that the second occurs."

"But, for the Lord's sake! What can we do?"

"We can do much for the Lord's sake, my friend, and He can do much for ours, if it be

His will. What we can do, we will; no more and certainly no less. Do you make your rounds of mercy, Friend Trowbridge, and hesech the so excellent Nora to prepare an extra large apple tart for dinner, as I shall undoubtedly bring home a guest. Me, I hasten, I rush, I fly to New York to consult a gentleman I met at the Medical Society dinner the other night. I shall get back when I return, but, if that be not in time for an early dinner, it will be no fault of Jules de Grandin's. *Adieu*, my friend, and may good luck attend me in my errand. *Cordieu*, but I shall need it!"

"DR. TROWBRIDGE, may I present Dr. Wolf?" de Grandin requested that evening, standing aside to permit a tall, magnificently built young man to precede him through the doorway of my consulting room. "I have brought him from New York to take dinner with us, and — perhaps — to aid us in that which we must do tonight without fail."

"How do you do, Dr. Wolf?" I responded formally, taking the visitor's hand in mine, but staring curiously at him the while. Somehow the name given by de Grandin did not seem at all appropriate. He was tall, several inches over six feet, with an enormous breadth of shoulder and extraordinary depth of chest. His face, disproportion-

ately large for even his great body, was high-cheeked and unusually broad, with a jaw of implacable squareness, and the deep-set, burning eyes beneath his overhanging brows were of a peculiarly piercing quality. There was something in the impassive nobility and steadfastness of purpose in that face of the central allegorical figure in Franz Stuck's masterpiece, *War*.

Something of my thought must have been expressed in my glance, for the young man noticed it and a smile passed swiftly across his rugged countenance, leaving it calm again in an instant. "The name is a concession to civilization, Doctor," he informed me. "I began life under the somewhat unconventional sobriquet of 'Johnny Curly Wolf', but that hardly seemed appropriate to my manhood's environment, so I have shortened the name to its greatest common divisor — I'm a full-blooded Dakotah, you know."

"Indeed?" I replied lamely.

"Yes. I've been a citizen for a number of years, for there are certain limitations on the men of my people who retain their tribal allegiance which would hamper me greatly in my life-work. My father became wealthy by grace of the white man's bounty and the demands of a growing civilization for fuel-oil, and he had the good judgment to have me educated in an

Eastern university instead of one of the Indian training schools. An uncle of mine was a tribal medicine man and I was slated to follow in his footsteps, but I determined to graft the white man's scientific medicine onto my primitive instruction. Medical work has appealed to me ever since I was a little shaver and was permitted to help the post surgeon at the agency office. I received my license to practice in '14, and was settling down to a study of pulmonary diseases when the big unpleasantness broke out in Europe."

He smiled again, somewhat grimly this time. "My people have been noted for rather bloody work in the old days, you know, and I suppose the call of my lineage was too strong for me. At any rate, I was inside a Canadian uniform and overseas within two months of the call for Dominion troops, and for three solid years I was in the thick of it with the British. When we came in I was transferred to the A. E. F., and finished my military career in a burst of shrapnel in the Argonne. I've three silver bones in each leg now and am drawing half-compensation from the government every month. I endorse the check over to the fund to relieve invalid Indian veterans of the army who aren't as well provided with worldly goods by Standard Oil as I am."

"But are you practicing in

New York now, Doctor?" I asked.

"Only as a student. I've been taking some special post-graduate work in diseases of the lungs and posterior poliomyelitis. As soon as my studies are completed I'm going west to devote my life and fortune to fighting those twin scourges of my people."

"Just so," de Grandin cut in, unable longer to refrain from taking part in the conversation. "Dr. Wolf and I have had many interesting things to speak of during our trip from New York, Friend Trowbridge, and now, if all is prepared, shall we eat?"

THE YOUNG Indian proved a charming dinner companion. Finely educated and highly cultured, he was indued with extraordinary skill as a raconteur, and his matter-of-fact stories of the "old contemps" — titanic struggle from the Marne and back, night raids in the trenches and desperate hand-to-hand fights in the blackness of No Man's land, of the mud and blood and silent heroism of the dressing-stations and of the phantom armies which rallied to the assistance of the British at Mons were colorful as the scenes of some old Spanish tapestry. Dinner was long since over and 11 o'clock had struck, still we lingered over our cigars, liqueurs and coffee in the drawing room. It was, de Grandin who dragged us back from the

days of '15 with a hasty glance at the watch strapped to his wrist.

"*Farbleu*, my friends," he exclaimed, "it grows late and we have a desperate experiment to try before the moon passes the meridian. Come, let us be about our work."

I looked at him in amazement, but the young Indian evidently understood his meaning, for he rose with a shrug of his broad shoulders and followed my diminutive companion out into the hall, where a great leather kit bag which bore evidence of having accompanied its owner through Flanders and Picardy rested beside the hall rack. "What's on the program?" I demanded, trailing in the wake of the other two, but de Grandin thrust hat and coat into my hands, exclaiming:

"We go to Madame Chetwynde's again, my friend. Remember what you saw about this time last night? *Cordieu*, you shall see that which has been vouchsafed to few men before another hour has passed, or Jules de Grandin is wretchedly mistaken!"

Piling my companions into the back seat, I took the wheel and drove through the still, moonlit night toward the Chetwynde cottage. Half an hour later we let ourselves quietly into the house with de Grandin's duplicate key and took our station in the darkened parlor once more.

A quick word from de Grandin gave Dr. Wolf his cue, and taking up his travel-beaten bag the young Indian let himself out of the house and paused on the porch. For a moment I saw his silhouette against the glass panel of the door, then a sudden movement carried him out of my line of vision, and I turned to watch the stairs down which I knew Idoline Chetwynde would presently come to perform her unholy rites of secret worship.

The ticking pulse-beats of the little ornamental clock on the mantelpiece sounded thunderous in the absolute quiet of the house; here and there a board squeaked and cracked in the gradually lowering temperature; somewhere outside, a motor horn tooted with a dismal, wailing note. I felt my nerves gradually tightening like the strings of a violin as the musician keys them up before playing, and tiny shivers of horripilation pursued each other down my spine and up my forearms as I sat waiting in the shadowy room.

The little French clock struck twelve sharp, silvery chimes. It had arrived, that hideous hour which belongs neither to the day which is dead nor to the new day stirring in the womb of Time, and which we call midnight for want of a better term. The moon's pale visage slipped slowly into view through the panes of the window behind the

Indian statue and a light, faltering step sounded on the stairs above us.

"*Mon Dieu*," de Grandin whispered fervently, "grant that I shall not have made a mistake in my calculations!" He half rose from his chair, gazing fixedly at the lovely, unconscious woman walking her tranced march toward the repellent idol, then stepped softly to the front window and tapped lightly on its pane with his fingertips.

Once again we saw Idoline Chetwynde prostrate herself at the feet of the black statue; once more her fluttering, breathless voice besought the evil thing to take her soul and destroy her body; then, so faint I scarcely heard it through the droning of the praying woman's words, the front door gave a soft click as it swung open on its hinges.

Young Dr. Wolf, once Johnny Curly Wolf, medicine man of the Dakotahs, stepped into the moonlit hall.

NOW I understand why he had hidden himself in the shadows of the porch when he left the house. Gone were his stylishly cut American clothes, gone was his air of well-bred sophistication. It was not the highly educated, cultured physician and student who entered the Chetwynde home, but a medicine man of America's primeval race in all the panoply

of his traditional office. Naked to the waist he was, his bronze torso gleaming like newly molded metal from the furnace. Long, tight-fitting trousers of beaded buckskin encased his legs, and on his feet were the moccasins of his forefathers. Upon his head was the war-bonnet of eagle feathers, and his face was smeared with alternate streaks of white, yellow and black paint. In one hand he bore a bull-hide tom-tom, and in his deep-set, smoldering eyes there burned the awful, deadly earnestness of his people.

Majestically he strode down the hall, paused some three or four paces behind the prostrate woman, then, raising his tom-tom above his head, struck it sharply with his knuckles.

Toom, toom, toom toom! the mellow, booming notes sounded again and still again. Bending slightly at the knees, he straightened himself, repeated the movement, quickened the cadence until he was rising and sinking a distance of six inches or so in a sort of stationary, bobbing dance. "Manitou, Great Spirit of my fathers!" he called in a strong, resonant voice. "Great Spirit of the forest dwellers and of the people of the plains, bear the call of the last of Thy worshippers:

"Hear my prayer, O Mighty Spirit,
As I do the dance before Thee,
Do the dance my fathers taught me,

Dance it as they danced before me,
As they danced it in their lodges,
As they danced it at their councils
When of old they sought Thy succor.

"Look upon this prostrate woman,
See her bow in supplication
To an alien, wicked spirit.
Thine she is by right of lineage,
Thine by right of blood and fore-
bears.

In the cleanly air of heaven
She should make her supplication,
Not before the obscene statue
Of a god of alien people.

"Hear my prayer, O Mighty Spirit,
Hear, Great Spirit of my fathers,
Save this woman of Thy people,
Smite and strike and make impotent
Demons from across the water,
Demons vile and wholly filthy,
And not seemly for devotion
From a woman of Thy people."

The solemn, monotonous intoning ceased, but the dance continued. But now it was no longer a stationary dance, for, with shuffling tread and half-bent body, Johnny Curly Wolf was circling slowly about the Hindoo idol and its lone worshipper.

Something — a cloud, perhaps — drifted slowly across the moon's face, obscuring the light which streamed into the hall. An oddly shaped cloud it was, something like a giant man astride a giant horse, and on his brow there seemed to be the feathered war-bonnet of the Dakotahs. The cloud grew in density. The moon rays became fainter and fainter, and finally the hall was in total darkness.

IN THE WEST there sounded the whistling bellow of a rising wind, shaking the casements of the house and making the very walls tremble. Deep and rumbling, growing louder and louder as it seemed to roll across the heavens on iron wheels, a distant peal of thunder sounded, increased in volume, finally burst in a mighty clap directly over our heads, and a fork of blinding, jagged lightning shot out of the angry sky. A shivering ring of shattered glass and of some heavy object toppling to a fall, a woman's wild, despairing shriek, and another rumbling, crashing peal of thunder deafened me.

By the momentary glare of a second lightning-flash I beheld a scene stranger than any painted by Dante in his vision of the underworld. Seemingly, a great female figure crouched with all the ferocity of a tigress above the prostrate form of Idoline Chetwynde, its writhing, sextuple arms grasping at the woman's prone body, or raised as though to ward off a blow, while from the window looking toward the west there leaped the mighty figure of an Indian brave armed with shield and war-club.

Johnny Curly Wolf? No! For Johnny Curly Wolf circled and gyrated in the measures of his tribal ghost-dance, and in one hand he held his tom-tom, while with the other he beat out the

rhythm of his dance-music.

It was but an instant that the lightning showed me this fantastic tableau, then all was darkness blacker than before, and a crashing of some stone thing shattered into half a thousand fragments broke the rumble of the thunder.

"Lights! Grand Dieu, lights, Friend Trowbridge!" de Grandin screamed in a voice gone high and thin with hysteria.

I pressed the electric switch in the hall and beheld Johnny Curly Wolf, still in tribal costume, great beads of sweat dewing his brow, standing over the body of Idoline Chetwynde, the hall window-panes blown from their frame and scattered over the floor like tiny slivers of frozen moonlight, and, toppled from its pedestal and broken into bits almost as fine as powder, the black statue of Kali, Goddess of the East.

"Take her up, my friend," de Grandin ordered me, pointing to Mrs. Chetwynde's lifeless body. "Pick her up and restore her to her bed. *Morbleu*, but we shall have to attend her like a new-born infant this night, for I fear me her nerves have had a shock from which they will not soon recover!"

All night and far past daylight we sat beside Idoline Chetwynde's bed, watching the faint color ebb and flow in her sunken cheeks, taking heedful count of her stimulants when



the tiny spark of waning life seemed about to flicker to extinction.

About 10 o'clock in the morning de Grandin rose from his seat beside the bed and stretched himself like a cat rising from prolonged sleep. "*Bon, tres bon!*" he exclaimed. "She sleeps. Her pulse, it is normal; her tem-

perature, it is right. We can safely leave her now, my friends. Anon, we shall call on her; but I doubt me if we shall more to do than wish her felicitations on her so miraculous cure. Meantime, let us go. My poor, forgotten stomach cries aloud reproaches on my so neglected mouth. I starve, I famish, I faint

of inanition. Behold, I am already become hut a wraith and a shadow!"

JULES DE GRANDIN drained his third cup of coffee at a gulp and passed the empty vessel back for replenishment. "Parbleu, my friends," he exclaimed, turning his quick, elfin smile from Dr. Wolf to me, "it was the beautiful adventure, was it not?"

"It might have been a beautiful adventure," I agreed grudgingly, "but just what the deuce was it? The whole thing's a mystery to me from beginning to end. What caused Mrs. Chetwynde's illness in the first place, what was the cause of her insane actions, and what was it I saw last night? Was there really a thunderstorm that broke the black image, and did I really see . . ."

"But certainly, my excellent one," he cut in with a smile as he emptied his cup and lighted a cigarette, "you did behold all that you thought you saw; no less."

"But . . ."

"No huts, if you please, good friend. I well know you will tease for an explanation as a pussy-cat begs for food while the family dines, and so I shall enlighten you as best I can. To begin:

"When first you told me of Madame Chetwynde's illness I knew not what to think, nor did

I think anything in particular. Some of her symptoms made me fear she might have been the victim of a *revenant*, but there were no signs of blood-letting upon her, and so I dismissed that diagnosis. But as we descended the stairs after our first visit, I did behold the abominable statue in the hall. 'Ah ha,' I say to me, 'what does this evil thing do here? Perhaps it makes the trouble with Madame Idoline?' And so I look at it most carefully.

"My friends, Jules de Grandin has covered much land with his little feet. In the arctic snows and in the equatorial heat he has seen the sins and follies and superstitions of men, and learned to know the gods they worship. So he recognized that image for what it was. It is of the goddess Kali, tutelary deity of the *Thags* of India, whose worship is murder and whose service is bloodshed. She goes by many names, my friends: sometimes she is known as Devi, consort of Siva and daughter of Himavat, the Himalaya Mountains. She is the Sakti, or female energy of Siva, and is worshipped in a variety of forms under two main classes, according as she is conceived as a mild and beneficent or as a malignant deity. In her milder shapes, besides Devi, 'the goddess,' she is called also Gauri 'the yellow,' or Uma, 'the bright.

In her malignant forms she is Durga, 'the inaccessible,' represented as a yellow woman mounted on a tiger, Chandi, 'the fierce,' and, worst of all, Kali, 'the black,' in which guise she is portrayed as dripping with blood, encircled with snakes and adorned with human skulls. In the latter form she is worshipped with obscene and bloody rites, oftener than not with human sacrifice. Her special votaries are the *Thags*, and at her dreadful name all India trembles, for the law of the English has not yet wiped out the horrid practice of *thaggery*.

"NOW, WHEN I beheld this filthy image standing in Madame Chetwynde's home I wondered much. Still, I little suspected what we later came to know for truth, for it is a strange thing that the gods of the East have little power over the people of the West. Behold, three hundred thousand Englishmen hold in complete subjection as many million Hindoos, though the subject people curse their masters daily by all the gods whom they hold sacred. It seems, I think, that only those who stand closer to the bare verities of nature are liable to be affected by gods and goddesses which are personifications of nature's forces. I know not whether this be so, it is but a theory of mine. At any rate, I saw but small connection be-

tween the idol and our sick lady's illness until Friend Trowbridge told me of her strain of American Indian ancestry. Then I say to me: 'Might not she, who holds a mixture of aboriginal blood in her veins, become affected by the strength of this heathen goddess? Or perhaps it is that fused blood is weaker than the pure strain, and the evil influence of the Black One may have found some loophole in her defense. One thing was most sure, in Madame Chetwynde's house there was clearly the odor of Eastern incense, yet nowhere was there visible evidence of perfume save such as a dainty woman of the West might use. Me, I sniffed like a hound while examining her, and kissed her fingers twice in farewell to make sure. This incense which were so all unaccounted for did puzzle me.

"You recall, Friend Trowbridge, how I questioned her maid about the punk smell, and how little satisfaction I got of her. 'There is going on here the business of monkeys,' I tell me as we leave the house. And so I make a print of the front door key that we may enter again at our convenience and see what is what.

"*Eh bien*, my friends, did we not see a sufficiency the following night when we beheld Madame Idoline fall forward on her face and make a voluntary offer of her soul and body to

alty is a great, a wonderful thing, my friends. That poor woman was shocked by the spectacle of her beloved mistress casting herself before the thing of stone, but the bare fact that her mistress did it was justification enough for her. Had she been asked to do so by Madame Chetwynde, I firmly believe she would have joined in the obscene devotions and given her own body and soul to the Black One along with that of

her beloved mistress whom she adored."

"Well — I'll be . . . But look here . . ." I began again, but:

"No more, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin commanded, rising and motioning to Dr. Wolf and me. "It is long since we have slept. Come, let us retire. Me, *parbleu*, I shall sleep until your learned societies shall issue profound treatises on the discovery of a twin brother to Monsieur Rip Van Winkle!"



Illustration by Rankin

The Council

John Peters wasn't the inventive sort, And certainly not one to dream a tale Fantastic as the story he told Hale, The super, when he gave his last report. The other man was sick in bed that night, So Peters filled in — there would be few calls; The place was nearly empty — in the halls, Small, solitary bulbs gave fitful light. He got a signal from the nineteenth floor Which hadn't had a rent for half a year; He'd taken no one there all day, and fear Of thieves beset him as he swung aside the door. The manner of the seven men was mild, But Peters couldn't stand the way they smiled.

The House

It had been built in Sixteen Sixty-Two, The townsfolk claimed, though none believed them. How Could any place so ancient never show Antiquity, hut always look brand new? The furnishings were modern, and the paint Was clean and bright. Upon the windowsills Were potted marigolds and daffodills, Which hardly gave the look of evil taint. They told me no one ever stayed there long, And there were some who vanished overnight. The walls *did* feel strange, though, and there were strong Air-currents from them. But I took to flight When, in a hidden closet space I found White, human bones piled in a horrid mound.

— Robert W. Lowndes

From *New Annals of Arkya*, copyright 1945 by Robert W. Lowndes

the Black One? I shall say so. "How to overcome this Eastern fury?" I ask me. "The excellent Katy Rooney have bathed her in holy water, and the blessed fluid have burned and sizzled on her so infamous head. Clearly, the force of Western churches is of little value in this case. Ah, perhaps she have attacked Madame Chetwynde through her strain of primitive blood. Then what?"

"*Mort d'un chat*, all suddenly I have it! At the dinner in New York I have met the young Dr. Wolf. He is a full-blooded American Indian and, he have told me, a medicine man of his people as well. Now, if this woman's weakness is her Indian blood, may not that same blood be her strength and her protection as well? I hope so."

"So I persuade Monsieur Wolf to come with me and pit the strength of his Great Spirit against the evil force of Kali of the *Thags*. Who will win? *Le bon Dieu* alone knows, but I have hopes."

FOR A MOMENT he regarded us with a quizzical smile, then resumed.

"The Indian of America, my friends, was truly an *savage noble*. The Spaniard saw in him only something like a beast to be enslaved and despoiled; the Englishman saw in him only a barrier to possession of the new country, and as such to be swept

back or exterminated; but to the Frenchman he was a noble character. Ha, did not my illustrious countrymen, the *Sieurs La Salle* and *Frontenac*, accord him his just dues? Certainly. His friendship was true, his courage undoubted, his religion a clean one. Why, then, could we not invoke the Indians' Great Spirit?"

"We know, my friends, or at least think we know, that there is but one true God, almighty and everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; but does that same God appear in the same manner to all peoples? *Mais non*. To the Arab He is Allah; to many so-called Christians He is but a sort of celestial Santa Claus; I greatly fear, Friend Trowbridge, that to many of your most earnest preachers He is little more than a disagreeable old man with the words 'Thou Shalt Not' engraved upon His forehead. But, for all these different conceptions, He is still God."

"And what of the deities of heathendom?" He paused, looking expectantly from one of us to the other, but as we made no reply, proceeded to answer his own question: "They are nothing, and yet they are something, too. They are the concentrated power of thought, of mistaken belief, of misconception. Yet, because thoughts are truly things, they have a certain power — *parbleu*, I think a power which is not to be

smeered upon. For years, for centuries, perhaps, that evil statue of Kali has been invoked in bloody and unseemly rites, and before her misshapen feet has been poured out the concentrated hate and wickedness of countless monkey-faced beathens. That did induce her with an evil power which might easily overcome the resistance of a sensitive nature, and all primitive peoples are more sensitive to such influences than are those whose ancestors have long been agnostic, however much and loudly they have prated of their piety."

"Very good. The Great Spirit of the Indian of America, on the other hand, being a clean and noble conception, is one of the manifestations of God Himself. For, countless generations the noble Red Man had clothed him with all the attributes of nobility. Shall this pure conception of the godhead go to waste? No, my friends, ten thousand times no! You cannot kill a noble thought any more than you can slay a noble soul; both are immortal."

"And so I did prevail upon the good Wolf to come with us and summon the massed thought of those despicable ones who have made him a goddess of their own uncleanness of mind. *Nom d'une anguille*, but the struggle was magnificent!"

"You mean to tell me that

I actually saw the Great Spirit, then?" I demanded incredulously.

"Ah bah, my friend," he replied, "have I not been at pains to tell you it was the massed, the concentrated thought and belief of all the Indians of today and for countless generations before today which our good Wolf invoked? *Mordieu*, can I never convince you that thought, though it be immaterial, is as much a thing as — as for example, the skull in your thick head?"

"But what about Mrs. Chetwynde's maid?" I asked, for deep in my mind there lurked a suspicion that the woman might know more of the unholy sights we had seen than she care to tell."

"Quite right," he replied, nodding gravely. "I, too, suspected her once. It was because of that I induced the excellent Katy to return to Madame Idoline's service and spy upon her. I discovered much, for Katy, like all her race, is shrewd, and when she knows what is wanted she knows how to get it. It appears the maid was fully aware of her mistress' subjection to the Black One, but, though she understood it not, so deep was her devotion to *Madame* her mistress that she took it on herself to cast obstacles in our way lest we prevent a continuance of *Madame's* secret worship. Loy-

When he'd danced close the other night, her smell seemed to have gotten into his lungs, from there radiated to every cell in his body, so even now he was half drugged with the influence of her. Most of all, it was the golden eyes that had hypnotized him — eyes that seemed to be peering into a spirit world, yet radiated warmth, excitement. Danger.

Dimly, Vance Filmore was aware of the bocor's chanting, a sing-song, weird chortling coming from deep within him. He glimpsed the bocor as he fiddled with the watch, thought he heard the broken thing tick from clear across the room. The rain outside hattered harder on the thatched roof. Filmore looked up, the spell of the girl mingling with the bocor's weird incantations and the violence of the rain. He lost all track of time.

Suddenly, Evans shrieked insanely, snapped the curtain across the altar. Vance Filmore woke, jerked himself to his feet. He thought he felt a drop of rain hit his head.

The mulatto calmed. "Do not be alarmed. When the moment of manifestation comes, it is painful."

Oddly, Filmore felt an indefinable ache himself. "Manifest . . . ?" He stared into Evans' face.

Evans was looking toward

the door, a gleam of self-satisfaction twisting his features.

Filmore whirled around.

She stood there, in the doorway, golden eyes sultry, a transparent gown clinging wetly to her body. Filmore thought that Evans and Sylvia exchanged quick looks.

"It can't be!" Filmore croaked.

"Love me, for God's sake!" the girl said, as though driven by unseen whips. She almost fell to him. He reached out, caught her. He was aware of the bocor slinking out of the door.

Holding her, Filmore licked his lips. "I don't understand. How'd you know I was here?" Then, to himself, he thought: *Maybe they made a deal.*

The girl stared at him as though only half there. "Just love me," she said more quietly, tugging at him so he almost lost his balance. They fell heavily on the cot.

Filmore caressed her back. "Lord, you're wet! Let me dry you off." He reached the mulatto's clothes chest, found a rag. He wiped her face, rubbed her head. He dried her shoulders.

Even through the cloth, the electric touch of her stirred him, brought back the full memory of her, sparked a demand for nearness. He hurried his face against her, felt the wet slipperiness of her body. "Sylvia!"

he whispered, lips sliding from her mouth to her chin, to the curve of her throat. Their arms tightened around each other, and the rain beat harder on the thatched roof. . . .

THE NEXT night, Filmore barged into the bocor's hut. "Where's the girl, dammit?"

The bocor stared at him, shrugged.

"We made love. I fell asleep. When I woke, she was gone." Now he knew he loved the girl more than anyone — as much as he'd loved his brother. No! he thought, More!

Evans stared at him, a faint grin tugging at his thick lips.

Filmore cursed. "So, you paid for the wine, so we're even? Hell! What happened last night wasn't magic, anyway. You hypnotized me, put me to sleep — went out and found her, made a deal. Okay, then, you creep. Don't bother. I'll find her myself."

Evans thick lips pulled up into a grin. He spread his hands. "Okay, okay, if you want to believe that. I shouldn't of done that, anyway. I was drunk. It is not good for okay to know magic. Dangerous."

"Magic, hell!" He started to turn.

"Okay, okay. You find the girl." The bocor laughed.

Filmore whirled around. "You think you're smart, don't you. Well, how about this? I'll give

you a test you can't worm out of. Last night was too easy. Too many chances for you to cheat."

The bocor's face tensed. He sagged onto the cot.

"Find my brother's killer!" He reached into his pocket, got out a half pint of rum, took a drink.

"I cannot do this," the bocor said, weakly, his shoulders shaking.

"You'd better, damn you. Find his killer — lay him dead at my feet." Filmore was sure Evans would back out. He let the liquor trickle from his mouth corner.

"But . . ."

"No huts! Do it. Now!"

"It is wrong. Dangerous."

"It isn't wrong. An eye for an eye."

"I can't," the bocor grunted.

"Hah!" Filmore exploded. "I guessed it. You're a big fake." He took another drink, handed the bottle to Evans. Then he lay a hand on his shoulder. "Tell you what I'll do: if you find my brother's killer — lay him dead at my feet — I'll give you the Company."

The bocor's big eyes widened. On his face, conflicting emotions seemed to be playing. He closed his eyes, bent his head, seeming scarcely to breathe. Suddenly, he jerked his head up. "Okay, okay. It is dangerous. But I will do it. For this, it will take much longer." He got up, went to the altar, handled the symbols. "I hope you will be pleased."

Behind The Curtain

by Leslie Jones

VANCE FILMORE moved aside the ragged curtain that shut off a corner of the hut. The dull light from an oil lamp behind revealed what seemed to be an altar. On a board across upright boxes were a goblet, a rusty knife, a broken watch, and a wilted flower — a collection of witch doctors' charms.

"You shouldn't of pulled the curtain," the dusky man said from the cot. He tilted the bottle of cheap wine to his lips.

A drop of rain from Filmore's black, matted hair plopped on the altar before he turned away, grinning. "What the hell's this? You a witch doctor?"

Filmore was tall, slender. His skin was chalky. A faint scar slanted across a cheek. The wrinkles and tired expression were scars, too. He laughed harshly.

"You make fun of me," Evans said. His bleary eyes tried to focus in anger. Humidity and liquor had collected beads of sweat on his broad, brown forehead. Large spots stained his shirt. "I am boco."

Filmore lurched to the cot, grabbed the bottle, took a swig, thrust it back into Evans' hands. "Hah! That's the same thing — witch doctor or boco."

Anger — hate — frustration.

Filmore thought he was ready to pay any price
to avenge his brother

LESLIE JONES had a short story. *If The Soil Is Good*, in the third issue of CHASE magazine; and had the book continued publication, *Behind the Curtain* would have appeared in a later issue, as we had been thinking of running at least one eerie mystery tale in each issue.

Filmore's feelings made him mean, cynical. He had vowed he would find the person who had murdered his brother, his twin. How long ago was it? God! He'd lost track of time, of reality. Over the months the hopelessness of solving his brother's murder had driven him to drown his grief and frustration in booze, to an animal-like, snarling desire to hurt anyone, everyone.

His brother had managed the family's plantation. He'd been a harsh overseer, but Vance had loved him more than anyone on earth. That deep affection turned to hate for his brother's killer. Even the fact that Vance was now sole owner of the plantation couldn't sweeten the bitterness that welled up in him.

Only one thing sometimes took his mind off his burning hate — Sylvia.

FUNNY, IT WAS girls that his brother had most mistreated. Among his enemies were other plantation owners, mis-

treated laborers, even tourists. But it was the girls who had most often sworn revenge.

Girls. Sylvia. God! He whirled around, faced the boco, his eyes red. "You were in that cheap caharet the other night, when I was dancing with her — with Sylvia. You know who I mean — that entertainer, that blonde from Brooklyn. Materialize her! If you're a boco, prove it — materialize her!"

For a moment, Evans sat there.

Vance's face relaxed. He grinned. "Like I thought. You're a fake."

"Ofay no make fun of doctor." Evans rose, staggered to the altar. "Okay, ofay. You give me wine. I give you girl." He hesitated, a dark, stained hand resting on the rusty knife. His voice was thick. "But, remember — it is not always healthy for the unbeliever." The boco manipulated the objects on the altar, put them down, turned again to face Filmore. "You must sit on cot — pray while I work magic. Listen to my voice — go into trance so vodun gods hear prayer."

Filmore snickered, grabbed the bottle from Evans' hand. "You theatrical old creep. Okay — I'll try. If I can keep from laughing."

He leaned back against the wall of the hut. Sylvia. That creamy skin the tropical sun had tanned to a golden hue.

Vance Filmore sat on the cot. The monotonous chanting and the thundering rain brought back vividly the previous night's experience. God, how he loved Sylvia — needed her! In this way, he was different from his brother, who had a different woman every week.

Rain sounds and chanting voice blended, and Filmore was vaguely aware of himself slumping on the cot, and that the oil lamp must have gone out, because the world was black . . .

The bocor's shriek woke him. He felt a sharp pain in his chest. He sat up, looked at Evans. Dawn was silvering through the cracks in the hut! The bocor

swept his hand, gestured toward the floor, to a point near Filmore's feet.

"Cut the dramatics, you lush," Filmore said, rubbing his eyes. He was angry. It had taken all night; he'd planned to look for Sylvia.

The bocor shrugged, but still stared at the floor.

Filmore dropped his gaze, then froze.

There, at his feet, was Sylvia. She was sprawled on her back, arms outstretched, her gown ripped down as if by lightning, her round breasts exposed. She was dead.

Just then, a drop of water splashed on a pink nipple.

The Reckoning

This time it was de Grandin all the way, from the opening gun; the second and third place stories, though had a tough tussle with those just behind them. But your votes show this final pattern.

(1) *The Tenants of Broussac*, Seabury Quinn; (2) *Secret of Lost Valley*, Robert E. Howard; (3) *Medium For Justice*, Victor Rousseau; (4) *The Tottenham Werewolf*, August Derleth; (5) *St Urag of the Tall*, Oscar Cook; (6) *The Temptation of Harringay*, H. C. Wells.

And H. C. Wells remains controversial, particularly when he seeks to be no more than subtly entertaining.

A Game Of Chess

by Robert Barr

Introduction by
Sam Moskowitz

CERTAINLY A. Merritt's *Seven Footprints to Satan* must rank among the most popular mystery melodramas of all time. In terms of sales and success

it most certainly is foremost among Merritt's works. Following its serialization in *ANCOSY AT-STORY* in five installments, July 2 to July 30, 1927 it saw

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"I return good for evil. I give you a chance
for your life; my nephew had none of your
honds."
+++++

three hard-cover editions from Boni & Liveright in 1928. Produced as a film by First National in 1929, it was accompanied by a hard-cover movie edition, produced by Grossett & Dunlap, of which at least five variations exist, indicating at least that many printings are known.

ABOOKS reprinted the novel by popular demand in five installments, June 24 to July 22, 1939, and the first blurb read: *In Satan's palace is a stairway and on that stairway are seven steps — four leading to all the power and the glory that this world can boast; three leading to the destruction of a man's very soul. This great novel of a man's gamble with Evil personified is a classic of fantasy and adventure. No one should fail to read it . . .*

The most significant series of publications of the novel was as Avon paperback Number 26, published in 1942. Between that date and 1966, sales have substantially passed the one million mark, and the novel seems to be firmly entrenched as a popular mystery classic.

The work has flaws, but dwelling on those will not explain away its popularity. The fascination of the story rests in the game of chance represented by the seven stairs that lead to the throne of a sinister genius who calls himself Satan. Four of the steps represent good and

three evil, after the legend of the Buddha. If a man treads on the four proper steps, he has at his command the power, influence and finances to fulfill his every wish. Should he step on one or more of the three wrong steps, his soul or his life may become forfeit.

Therein lay the full appeal, the essence of the story.

Was A. Merritt the first to utilize so strikingly dramatic an idea?

In this case he was not, though his usage of the theme was so expertly conceived and related that it became a classic. Once before, the possible origin of a major Merritt book was traced to a previous story. That involved the similarity to *The Wondersmith* by Fitz-James O'Brien — the tale of the deadly mannikens with their needle-like swords — to *Burn Witch Burn* by A. Merritt.

It seems quite possible that *Seven Footprints to Satan* had its genesis in a short story titled *A Game of Chess* written by Robert Barr for *PEARSON'S MAGAZINE*, March, 1900. *PEARSON'S MAGAZINE* had newsstand distribution throughout the United States, and the issue in question appeared when Merritt was 17.

Robert Barr had in common with A. Merritt spending the early years of his journalistic career as a reporter. While pursuing news scoops for the *DIE-*

TROTT FREE PRESS, legend has it that Barr rifled mail bags, crossed a river on ice floes and "had a revolver gauntlet." Merritt, of course could have topped Barr with his claim to having led a lynching, been eyewitness to an event of such political consequence that he was given a year-long, all-expense-paid tour to Mexico and Central America until things cooled off and to his eventually becoming one of the nation's prime reporters of executions.

Robert Barr was a very popular, if transient author, having published about 20 books, including a pastiche on Sherlock Holmes in *THE IDLER* (1892) under the pen name of Luke

Sharp: *The Adventures of Sherlock Kombs*. Certainly his most unusual detective story was *From Whose Bourne* (Chatto & Windus, 1893) in which the spirit of a dead man in that other world enlists the ghost of the famed Paris detective M. Lecocq, to clear his wife, who has been accused of his murder!

As highly original and diversified in his plot ideas as he was, *A Game of Chess* certainly ranks as one of Barr's most inspired efforts, as a unique tale of murder, by an ingenious scientific method approaching science fiction, which quite possibly seeded the idea of *Seven Footprints to Satan* in the teen-age mind of A. Merritt.

HERE FOLLOWS a rough translation of the letter which Henri Drumont wrote in Boukrah, two days before his death, to his uncle, Count Ferrand in Paris. It explains the incidents which led up to the situation hereinafter to be described.

MY DEAR UNCLE,

You will have gathered from former letters of mine, that, when one gets east of Buda Pest, official corruption becomes rampant to an extent hardly believable in the West. Goodness knows, things are bad enough in Paris, but Paris official life

is comparatively clean when brought into contrast with Boukrah. I was well aware before I left France that much money would have to be secretly spent if we were to secure the concession for lighting Boukrah with electricity, but I was unprepared for the exactions that were actually levied upon me. It must be admitted that the officials are rapacious enough, but once bought, they remain bought, or, at least, such has been my experience of them.

There are, however, a horde of hangers-on, who seem even more insatiable than the governing body of the town, and the worst of these is one Schwikoff, editor of the leading paper here, the *BOUKRAH GAZETTE*.

which is merely a daily blackmailing sheet. He has every qualification needed by an editor of a paper in Eastern Europe, which may be summed up by saying that he is demonstrably expert with the rapier, and a dead shot with a pistol. He has said time and again that his scurrilous paper could wreck our scheme, and I believe there is some truth in his assertion. Be that as it may, I have paid him at different times large sums of money, but each payment seems but the precursor of a more outrageous demand. At last I was compelled to refuse further contributions to his banking account, and the young man smiled, saying he hoped my decision as not final, for, at it was, I should regret it. Although Schwikoff did not know it, I had the concession signed and completed at that moment, which document I sent to you yesterday morning. I expected Schwikoff would be very angry when he learned of this, but such did not appear to be the case.

He met me last night in the smoking-room of the Imperial Club, and shook hands with great apparent cordiality, laughing over his discomfiture, and assuring me that I was one of the shrewdest businessmen he had ever met. I was glad to see him take it in this way, and later in the evening when he asked me to have a game of chess with him, I accepted his invitation, thinking better for the Company that he should be a friend, if he were so disposed.

We had not progressed far with the game, when he suddenly accused me of making a move I had no right to make. I endeavored to explain, but he spring up in an assumed rage and dashed a glass of wine in my face. The room was crowded with officers and gentlemen, I know you may think me foolish for having sent my seconds to such a man as Schwikoff, who is a well known blackmailer, but, nevertheless, he comes of a good family, and I, who

have served in the French Army, and am of your blood, could not accept tamely such an insult. If what I hear of his skill as a swordsman is true, I enter the contest well aware that I am out-classed, for I fear I have neglected the training of my right arm in my recent pursuit of scientific knowledge. Whatever may be the outcome, I have the satisfaction of knowing that the task given me has been accomplished. Our Company has now the right to establish its plant and lay its wires in Boukrah, and the people here have such an Eastern delight in all that is brilliant and glittering, that I feel certain our project will be a financial success.

Schwikoff and I will meet about the time you receive this letter, or, perhaps, a little earlier, for we fight at daybreak, with rapiers, in the large room of the Fencing School of Ams in this place.

Accept, my dear uncle, the assurance of my most affectionate consideration. — Your unworthy nephew, HENRI.

The old man's hand trembled as he laid down the letter after reading it, and glanced up at the clock. It was the morning of the duel, and daylight came earlier at Boukrah than at Paris.

Count Ferrand was a member of an old French family that had been impoverished by the Revolution. Since then, the Ferrand family had lived poorly enough until the Count, as a young man, had turned his attention towards science, and now, in his old age, he was supposed to possess fabulous wealth, and was known to be the head of one of the largest

electric manufacturing companies in the environs of Paris. No one at the works was aware that the young man, Henri Drumont, who was given employ in the manufactory after he had served his time in the army, was the nephew of the old Count, for the head of the company believed that the young man would come to a more accurate knowledge of the business if he had to take the rough with the smooth, and learn his trade from the bottom upwards.

The glance at the clock told the old Count that the duel, whatever its result, had taken place. So there was nothing to be done but await tidings. It was the manager of the works who brought them in.

"I am sorry to inform you, sir," he said, "that the young man, Henri Drumont, whom we sent to Boukrah, was killed this morning in a duel. His assistant telegraphs for instructions. The young man has no relatives here that I know of, so I suppose it would be as well to have him buried where he died."

The manager had no suspicion that he was telling his Chief of the death of his heir.

"The body is to be brought back to France," said the Count quietly.

And it was done. Later, when the question arose of the action to be taken regarding the concession received from Boukrah,

the Count astonished the directors by announcing that, as the concession was an important one, he himself would take the journey to Boukrah, and remain there until the electric plant, already forwarded, was in position, and a suitable local manager found.

THE COUNT took the Orient Express from Paris, and, arriving in Boukrah, applied himself with an energy hardly to be expected from one of his years, to the completion of the work which was to supply the city with electricity.

Count Ferrand refused himself to all callers until the electric plant was in operation, and the interior of the building he had bought, completed to his satisfaction. Then, practically the first man admitted to his private office was Schwikoff, editor of the *BOUKRAH GAZETTE*. He had sent in his card with a request, written in passable French, for information regarding the electrical installation, which would be of interest, he said, to the readers of the *GAZETTE*. Thus Schwikoff was admitted to the presence of Count Ferrand, whose nephew he had killed, but the journalist, of course, knew nothing of the relationship between the two men, and thought, perhaps, he had done the courteous old gentleman a favor, in removing from the path of his advance-

ment the young man who had been in the position now held by this gray-haired veteran.

The ancient noble received his visitor with scrupulous courtesy, and the blackmailer, glancing at his hard, inscrutable face, lined with experience, thought that here, perhaps, he had a more difficult victim to bleed than the free-handed young fellow whom he had so deferentially removed from existence, adhering strictly to the rules of the game, himself acquitted of all guilt by the law of his country, and the custom of his city, passing unscathed into his customary walk of life, free to rapier the next man who offended him. Count Ferrand said politely that he was ready to impart all the information in his possession for the purposes of publication. The young man smiled and shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"To tell you the truth, sir, at once and bluntly, I do not come so much for the purpose of questioning you regarding your business, as with the object of making some arrangement concerning the Press, with which I have the great honor to be connected. You may be aware, sir, that much of the success of your company will depend on the attitude of the Press towards you. I thought, perhaps, you might be able to suggest some method by which all difficulties would be

smoothed away; a method that would result in our mutual advantage."

"I shall not pretend to misunderstand you," replied the Count, "but I was led to believe that large sums had already been disbursed, and that the difficulties, as you term them, had already been removed."

"So far as I am concerned," returned the blackmailer, "the sums paid to me were comparatively trivial, and I was led to hope that when the company came into active operation, as, thanks to your energy, is now the case, it would deal more liberally with me."

The Count in silence glanced at some papers he took from a pigeonhole, then made a few notes on the pad before him. At last he spoke.

"Am I right in stating that an amount exceeding ten thousand francs was paid to you by my predecessor, in order that the influence of your paper might be assured?"

Schwikoff again shrugged his shoulders.

"It may have been something like that," he said carelessly. "I do not keep my account of these matters."

"It is a large sum," persisted Ferrand.

"Oh! a respectable sum; but still you must remember what you got for it. You have the

right to bleed for ever all the inhabitants of Boukrah."

"And that gives you the right to bleed us?"

"Oh! if you like to put it that way, yes. We give you *quid pro quo* by standing up for you when complaints of your exactions are made."

"Precisely. But I am a businessman, and would like to see where I am going. You would oblige me, then, by stating a definite sum, which would be received by you in satisfaction of all demands."

"Well, in that case, I think twenty thousand francs would be a moderate amount."

"I cannot say that moderation is the most striking feature of your proposal," said the Count drily, "still we shall not trouble about that, if you will be reasonable in the matter of payment. I propose to pay you in instalments of a thousand francs a month."

"That would take nearly two years," objected Schwikoff. "Life is uncertain. Heaven only knows where we shall be two years from now."

"Most true; or even a day hence. Still, we have spent a great deal of money on this establishment, and our income has not yet begun; therefore, on behalf of the company, I must insist on easy payments. I am willing, however, to make it two thousand francs a month, but beyond that I should not

care to go without communicating with Paris."

"Oh, well," swaggered Schwikoff, with the air of a man making great concessions, "I suppose we may call that satisfactory, if you make the first payment now."

"I do not keep such a sum in my office, and, besides, I wish to impose further terms. It is not my intention to make an arrangement with any but the leading paper of this place, which I understand the *GAZETTE* to be."

"A laudable intention. The *GAZETTE* is the only paper that has any influence in Boukrah."

"Very well; then I must ask you, for your own sake as for mine, to keep this matter a strict secret; even to deny that you receive a subsidy, if the question should come up."

"Oh, certainly, certainly."

"You will come for payment, which will be in gold, after office hours, on the first of each month. I shall be here alone to receive you. I should prefer that you came in by the back way, where your entrance will be unseen, and so we shall avoid comment, because, when I refuse the others, I should not care for them to know that one of their fellows has had an advantage over them. I shall take the money from the bank before it closes. What hour, therefore, after six o'clock will be most convenient to you?"

"That is immaterial — seven, eight, or nine, or even later, if you like."

"Eight o'clock will do; by that time everyone will have left the building but myself. I do not care for late hours, even if they occur but once a month. At eight o'clock precisely you will find the door at the back ajar. Come in without announcement, so that we may not be taken by surprise. The door is self-locking, and you will find me here with the money. Now, that I may be able to obtain the gold in time, I must bid you adieu."

AT EIGHT O'CLOCK precisely Count Ferrand, standing in the passage, saw the back door shoved open and Schwikoff enter, closing it behind him.

"I hope I have not kept you waiting," said Schwikoff.

"Your promptitude is exceptional," said the other politely. "As a businessman, I must confess I like punctuality. I have left the money in the upper room. Will you have the goodness to follow me?"

They mounted four pairs of stairs, all lighted by incandescent lamps. Entering a passageway on the upper floor, the Count closed the big door behind him; then opening another door, they came to a large oblong room, occupying nearly the whole of the top storey,

brilliantly lighted by an electric lustre depending from the ceiling.

This is my experimenting laboratory," said the old man as he closed the second door behind him.

It was certainly a remarkable room, entirely without windows. On the wall, at the right hand near the entrance, were numerous switches in shining brass and copper and steel.

From the door onward were perhaps ten feet of ordinary flooring, then across the whole width of the room extended a gigantic chess board, the squares yellow and gray, made alternately of copper and steel; beyond that again was another ten feet of plain flooring, which supported a desk and some chairs. Schwikoff's eyes glittered as he saw a pile of gold on the desk. Near the desk was a huge open fireplace, constructed like no fireplace Schwikoff had ever seen before. The center, where the grate should have been, was occupied by what looked like a great earthenware bathtub, some six or seven feet long. "That," said the electrician, noticing the other's glance at it, "is an electric furnace of my own invention, probably the largest electric furnace in the world. I am convinced there is a great future before carbide of calcium, and I am carrying on some experiments drifting towards

the perfection of the electric crucible."

"Carbide of calcium?" echoed Schwikoff, "I never heard of it."

"Perhaps it would not interest you, but it is curious from the fact that it is a rival of the electric light, and yet only through the aid of electricity is carbide of calcium made commercially possible."

"Electricity creates its own rival, you mean; most interesting I am sure. And is this a chessboard let into the floor?"

"Yes, another of my inventions. I am a devotee of chess."

"So am I."

"Then we shall have to have a game together. You don't object to high stakes I hope?"

"Ob, no, if I have the money."

"Ah, well, we must have a game with stakes high enough to make the contest interesting."

"Where are your chessmen? They must be huge."

"Yes, this board was arranged so that living chessmen might play on it. You see, the alternate squares are of copper, the others of steel. That black line which surrounds each square is hard rubber, which does not allow the electricity to pass from one square to another."

"You use electricity, then, in playing."

"Oh, electricity is the motive power of the game; I will explain it all to you presently; meanwhile, would you oblige

me by counting the gold on the desk? I think you will find there exactly two thousand francs."

The old man led the way across the metal chessboard. He proffered a chair to Schwikoff, who sat down before the desk.

Count Ferrand took the remaining chair, carried it over the metal platform, and sat down near the switch, having thus the huge chessboard between him and his guest. He turned a lever from one polished knob to another, the transit causing a wicked, vivid flash to illuminate the room with the venomous glitter of blue lightning. Schwikoff gave a momentary start at the crackle and the blinding light. Then he continued his counting in silence. At last he looked up and said, "This amount is quite correct."

"Please do not move from your chair," commanded the Count. "I warn you that the chessboard is now a broad belt of death between you and me. On every disc the current is turned, and a man stepping anywhere on the board will receive into his body two thousand volts, killing him instantly as with a stroke of lightning, which, indeed, it is."

"Is this a practical joke?" asked Schwikoff, turning a little pale about the lips, sitting still, as he had been ordered to do.



"It is practical enough, and no joke, as you will learn when you know more about it. You see this circle of twenty-four knobs at my hand, with each knob of which, alternately, this lever communicates when I turn it."

As the Count spoke he moved the lever, which went crackling past a semi-circle of knobs, emitting savage gleams of steel-like fire as it touched each metal projection.

"From each of these knobs," explained the Count, as if he were giving a scientific lecture, "electricity is turned on to a certain combination of squares before you. When I began

speaking, the whole board was electrified; now, a man might walk across that board, and his chances of reaching this side alive would be as three to one.

Schwikoff sprang suddenly to his feet, terror in his face, and seemed about to make a dash for it. The old man pushed the lever back into its former position.

"I want you to understand," said the Count suavely, "that upon any movement on your part, I shall instantly electrify the whole board. And please remember that, although I can make the chessboard as safe as the floor, a push on this lever and the metal becomes a belt of destruction. You must keep a cool head on your shoulders, Mr. Schwikoff, otherwise you have no chance for your life."

SCHWIKOFF, standing there stealthily drew a revolver from his hip pocket. The Count continued in even tones:

"I see you are armed, and I know you are an accurate marksman. You may easily shoot me dead as I sit here. I have thought that all out in the moments I have given to the consideration of this business. On my desk downstairs is a letter to the manager, saying that I am called suddenly to Paris, and that I shall not return for a month. I ask him to go on with the work, and tell him on no account to al-

low anyone to enter this room. You might shout till you were hoarse, but none outside would hear you. The walls and ceiling and floor have been deadened so effectively that we are practically in a silent, closed box. There is no exit except up through the chimney, but if you look at the crucible to which I called your attention you will see that it is now white hot, so there is no escape that way. You will, therefore, be imprisoned here until you starve to death, or until despair causes you to commit suicide by stepping on the electrified floor."

"I can shatter your switchboard from here with bullets."

"Try it," said the old man calmly. "The destruction of the switchboard merely means that the electricity comes permanently on the floor. If you shatter the switchboard, it will then be out of my power to release you, even if I wished to do so, without going down stairs and turning off the electricity at the main. I assure you that all these things have had my most earnest consideration, and while it is possible that something may have been overlooked, it is hardly probable that you, in your now excited state of mind, will chance upon that omission."

Schwikoff sank back in his chair.

"Why do you wish to murder me?" he asked. "You may re-

tain your money, if that is what you want, and I shall keep quiet about you in the paper."

"Oh, I care nothing for the money nor the paper."

"Is it because I killed your predecessor?"

"My predecessor was my nephew and my heir. Through his duel with you, I am now a childless old man, whose riches are but an incumbrance to him, and yet those riches would buy me freedom were I to assassinate you in broad daylight in the street. Are you willing now to listen to the terms I propose to you?"

"Yes."

"Very good. Throw your pistol into the corner of the room beside me; its possession will do you no good."

AFTER A moment's hesitation, Schwikoff flung his pistol across the metal floor into the corner. The old man turned the lever to still another knob.

"Now," he said, "you have a chance of life again; thirty-two of the squares are electrified, and thirty-two are harmless. Stand, I beg of you, on the square which belongs to the Black King."

"And meet my death."

"Not on that square, I assure you. It is perfectly safe."

But the young man made no movement to comply. "I ask you to explain your intention."

"You shall play the most sin-

ister game of chess you have ever engaged in; Death will be your opponent. You shall have the right to the movements of the King — one square in any direction that you choose. You will never be in a position in which you have not the choice of at least two squares upon which you can step with impunity; in fact, you shall have at each move the choice of eight squares on which to set your foot, and as a general thing, four of those will mean safety, and the other four death, although sometimes the odds will be more heavily against you, and sometimes more strongly in your favour. If you reach this side unscathed, you are then at liberty to go, while if you touch one of the electric squares, your death will be instantaneous. Then I shall turn off the current, place your body in that electrical furnace, turn on the current again, with the result that for a few moments there will be thick, black smoke from the chimney, and a handful of white ashes in the crucible."

"And you run no danger."

"No more than you did when you stood up against my nephew, having previously unjustly insulted him."

"The duel was carried out according to the laws of the code."

"The laws of my code are more generous. You have a chance for your life. My nephew had no such favour shown

to him; he was doomed from the beginning, and you knew it."

"He had been an officer in the French Army."

"He allowed his sword arm to get out of practice, which was wrong, of course, and he suffered for it. However, we are not discussing him; it is your fate that is in question. I give you now two minutes in which to take your stand on the King's square."

"And if I refuse?"

"If you refuse, I turn the electricity on the whole board, and then I leave you. I will tear up the letter which is on my desk below, return here in the morning, give the alarm, say you broke in to rob me of the gold which is beside you on the desk, and give you in charge of the authorities, a disgraced man."

"But what if I tell the truth?"

"You would not be believed, and I have pleasure in knowing that I have money enough to place you in prison for the rest of your life. The chances are, however, that, with the electricity fully turned on, this building will be burned down before morning. I fear my insulation is not perfect enough to withstand so strong a current. In fact, now that the thought has suggested itself to me, fire seems a good solution of the difficulty. I shall arrange the wires on leaving so that a conflagration will break out within an hour after my de-

parture, and, I can assure you, you will not be rescued by the firemen when they understand their danger from live wires in a building from which, I will tell them, it is impossible to cut off the electricity. Now, sir, you have two minutes."

SCHWIKOFF stood still while Ferrand counted the seconds left to him; finally, as the time was about to expire, he stepped on the King's square, and stood there, swaying slightly, drops of perspiration gathering on his brow.

"Brava!" cried the Count, "you see, as I told you, it is perfectly safe. I give you two minutes to make your next move."

Schwikoff, with white lips, stepped diagonally to the square of the Queen's Pawn, and stood there, breathing hard, but unharmed.

"Two minutes to make the next move," said the old man, in the unimpassioned tones of a judge.

"No, no!" shouted Schwikoff excitedly, "I made my last move at once; I have nearly four minutes. I am not to be hurried; I must keep my head cool. I have, as you see, superb control over myself."

His voice had now risen to a scream, and his open hand drew the perspiration down from his brow over his face, streaking it grimly.

"I am calm!" he shrieked, his

knees knocking together, "but this is no game of chess; it is murder. In a game of chess I could take all the time I wanted in considering a move."

"True, true!" said the old man suavely, leaning back in his chair, although his hand never left the black handle of the lever. "You are in the right. I apologize for my infringement of the laws of chess; take all the time you wish, we have the night before us."

Schwikoff stood there long in the ominous silence, a silence interrupted now and then by a startling crackle from the direction of the glowing electric furnace. The air seemed charged with electricity and almost unbreathable. The time given him, so far from being an advantage, disintegrated his nerve, and as he looked fearfully over the metal chessboard the copper squares seemed to be glowing red hot, and the dangerous illusion that the steel squares were cool and safe became uppermost in his mind.

He curbed with difficulty his desire to plunge, and stood balancing himself on his left foot, cautiously approaching the steel square with his right toe. As the foot neared the steel square, Schwikoff felt a strange thrill pass through his body. He drew back his foot quickly with a yell of terror, and stood, his body inclining now to the right, now to

(Turn to page 69)

The Man From Nowhere

Edward D. Hoch

(author of *Village of the Dead*, *The Witch Is Dead*)

THE INTERESTED reader may find the tale of Kaspar Hauser's strange life and stranger death related at some length in volume eleven of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. And perhaps the story of Douglas Zadig's life and death will be there some day, too.

For Douglas Zadig was also a man from nowhere, a man who came out of the mists and died in the snow — just as Kaspar Hauser had over one hundred years ago.

This is the story of Douglas Zadig's last day on earth, and

Like Kaspar Hauser, he appeared from nowhere; and like Hauser, he died strangely . . .

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Letters continue to come in, referring to Simon Ark; and while some of you do not care for EDWARD D. HOCH's investigator, the requests for more of this series exceed the expressions of dissent. There are, however, two Simon Arks — the second, apparently inhabiting a parallel time-world, is a somewhat younger man, and is little more than the usual private eye, looking into sexy crime cases — so there are a number of stories which seem to be part of the series, but actually are not. Not the original series, anyway.

of the people who were with him when he died . . .

It was a cold, bleak Friday afternoon in early November 194— when Simon Ark called me at my office. I was in the midst of checking some final galley proofs for our January books, but I tossed them aside when I recognized his voice on the line. "Simon! How've you been?"

"Busy," he replied. "How would you like to go up to Maine for the weekend?"

"Maine? In November? Nobody goes up there except hunters this time of year."

"Hunters and publishers," Simon Ark corrected; "I want to see a man, and since he's a writer of sorts, I thought it might be good to take you along. That is, if you're free . . ."

I'd learned long ago that an invitation from Simon Ark was never as casual as it sounded.

If he was going up to Maine for the weekend, there was a reason for it, and I wanted to be with him. "I'm free," I said. "When should I meet you?"

"Can you be at Grand Central at six? We'll take the New Haven part of the way."

"I'll be there. At the information booth . . ."

I called my wife after that, explaining the reason for my sudden trip. She knew Simon Ark almost as well as I did, and she was one of the few people in this world who understood. She said goodbye to me with that little catch in her breath that told me she'd be waiting for whatever adventures I had to relate upon my return.

And then I was off, on a weekend I was never to forget . . .

I'D FIRST MET Simon Ark years before, when I was still a newspaper reporter; and though I'd lost track of him for several years, he'd turned up again recently to renew our friendship. He was an odd man by any standards, a tall, heavy-set figure with an expression that was at times saintly.

My experiences with him in the past, together with the tales he'd related to me over a beer or a glass of wine, told me that he was someone not really of our world at all. He belonged to the world of the past — to the world of the supernatural, perhaps, but certainly not to the

world of Twentieth Century America.

He was a man who was searching, searching for what he called the Ultimate Evil, the devil himself. I'd laughed at first, or thought possibly that he was a little crazy; but I didn't laugh any more, and I knew that if anything he was the sanest man in the world. He found evil everywhere, because there was evil everywhere, and I knew that someday he would have his wish; someday he would confront Satan himself.

That was why I always went with him when he asked. He'd been searching for a long time, and the meeting might never take place in my lifetime; but if it did I wanted to be there, too.

So that was why I was with him as the train rumbled north toward New England that night. "What's it all about this time, Simon?" I asked finally, when no information was forthcoming.

HE GAZED out the train window, almost as if he could see something in the darkness besides the irregular patterns of light from buildings and roads.

Presently he asked, "Did you ever hear of a man called Douglas Zadig?"

The name seemed somehow familiar, but I had to shake my head. "Who is he?"

"He is a man from nowhere."

a man without family or country, a man without a past. You may have read about him some ten years ago, when he walked out of an English mist one night to become an overnight sensation."

"I remember now," I said. "He was a youth of about twenty at the time, and he claimed to have no memory of his past life. He spoke English very poorly, and his clothes were almost rags. The only thing he remembered was that his first name was Douglas. When they found him, he was carrying a worn French copy of Voltaire's novel *Zadig*, so the newspapers named him Douglas Zadig."

"You have a good memory for details," Simon Ark said. "As you probably remember, this Douglas Zadig has remained a complete mystery. His fingerprints were not on file anywhere in the world; his picture has never been identified by anyone. He is simply a man without a past."

"I lost track of him a few years back, though," I told Simon. "What's he been doing recently?"

"I ran into him a few years ago in London," Simon Ark continued. "I was in England to investigate an odd happening in Devonshire, and I happened to hear him speaking at a sort of rally. He's become quite a writer and speaker in some circles

— a sort of prophet, I suppose you'd call him."

"Is this the man we're going up to Maine to see?"

"Quite correct. He came to this country with an American doctor two years ago. The doctor — a man named Adam Hager — has actually adopted him as a son, and the two of them are living in Maine."

"Odd, but hardly in your field of investigation, is it, Simon?"

The train rumbled on through the small New England towns, along the dark waiting waters of Long Island Sound. Around us, people were drifting into sleep, and the seat lights were being dimmed.

Simon Ark took a slim volume from his pocket and held it out for my examination. I glanced at the cover and saw that the unlikely title was, *On The Eternal War Between The Forces Of Good And The Forces Of Evil*. The author was Douglas Zadig.

"So?" I questioned.

Simon Ark returned the book to his pocket. "The odd thing about this book — as with all of Douglas Zadig's writings and speeches — is that his apparently new philosophy is actually lifted almost word-for-word from the teachings of a religious leader named Zoroaster, who lived seven centuries before Christ..."

noon to reach our destination, a small town called Katandun in the northern part of the state. It was cold up here, and a fresh layer of snow already covered the ground. All around us were mountains and lakes and forests, and it seemed impossible that such a place could be only a single night's journey from New York.

There was a small hotel of sorts, where we left what few belongings we'd brought along. It was all but empty now, but in another week I imagined it would be full of sportsmen up from Bangor and Boston.

"You fellows hunters?" the room clerk asked us. "Little early in the season for good hunting."

"We're hunters of a very special type of game," Simon Ark replied. "Can you direct us to the house of Doctor Hager?"

"Sure; it's right at the edge of town, where the road turns. Big white place. You can't miss it."

"Thank you."

The house of Doctor Hager was indeed easy to find; and from the look of the barren white fields that surrounded it, I guessed that someone had once tried farming the land.

Doctor Hager himself was average in almost every respect. He might have been a typical country doctor, but he might just as well have been a big city businessman. There was a

IT TOOK us until Saturday

look of shrewdness about his eyes that contrasted with the weak smile that seemed always on his lips.

Simon Ark explained that we were from a New York publishing company, and had come up to speak with Douglas Zadig about the possibility of doing one of his books.

"Come in, by all means," Doctor Hager urged us. "I'm sure Douglas will be happy to speak with you. There are so many people interested in his work . . .

The house was even larger than it had seemed from outside, and we saw at once that we were not the only visitors. A handsome young woman of perhaps thirty, and an older man with thin, drawn features were sitting in the living room.

Doctor Hager took charge of the introductions, and I learned that the woman was a Mrs. Eve Brent, from Chicago. The older man was Charles Kingsley, and I recognized him as a retired manufacturer, whose name was prominent in financial circles.

"These are some New York publishers," Doctor Hager announced proudly, "who have come all the way up here to talk with Douglas." Then, turning to us, he explained, "Our house here is always open to visitors. Mrs. Brent and Mr. Kingsley are staying with us for a few weeks, to try and find themselves spiritually."

I had taken the chair next to Mrs. Brent, and I asked her where Douglas Zadig was, just to get the conversation started.

"He's upstairs in his room; I think he'll be down shortly."

"You're a long way from Chicago, aren't you?" I asked.

"My . . . my husband died a few years back. Since then, I've just been at loose ends, traveling to Europe and South America; it wasn't until I read one of Douglas Zadig's books that I found myself again."

I saw that Simon was busy talking with Hager and Mr. Kingsley. But all conversation stopped with the sudden entrance of a thin young man whom I knew to be Douglas Zadig.

He was taller than I'd supposed, with gaunt, pointed features of the type that stayed in your memory. There was a slight limp to his walk, and I remembered reading now that he'd had the limp when he first appeared, more than ten years ago in England.

"I'm sorry to be late," he apologized, in a rich full voice, with barely a trace of English accent. "But it happened again."

Whatever it was that had "happened" was enough to bring gasps from the Doctor and the two guests. Hager rushed to Douglas Zadig's side and quickly examined his head.

"The same side as before, Adam," the young man said. "I

was shaving, when suddenly I felt this blow on the temple; there's not much blood this time, though."

"The skin is broken, though," Doctor Hager said. "Just like the other time."

Simon Ark rose from his chair and went forward to examine the young man. "Just what is the trouble here?" he asked, addressing the question to the four of them.

It was Mrs. Brent at my side who answered. "Douglas has been the victim of two mysterious attacks, both while he was alone in his room. We . . . we think it might be the . . . the devil . . ."

I SAW SIMON ARK'S quiet eyes come alive at the word, and I knew that in some mysterious way he'd come into conflict again with the Evil he eternally sought. From outside, a slight wind stirred the barren trees; and through the window I could see a brief guest of snow eddy up into the air.

Charles Kingsley snorted and took out a cigar. "This whole business is nonsense. We're not living in the Middle Ages any more; the devil doesn't come around attacking people."

"I fear you're quite wrong," Simon Ark spoke quietly. "Satan is just as real today as he was a thousand years ago; and there's no reason to suppose that his tactics have changed

any in that time. If I were more certain he was among us, in fact, I'd suggest a rite of exorcism."

"We'd need a priest for that," Mrs. Brent said; "there isn't one within miles of here."

Simon Ark shook his head. "In the early days of Christianity, it was quite common for lay persons to exorcise the devil. But I would not want to attempt it under the present circumstances."

Douglas Zadig spoke from the doorway, where he'd remained during Simon Ark's brief examination. "Just what do you mean by that, sir? You talk oddly for a book publisher."

"I have other professions. I refer to the peculiar doctrine you preach as to the eternal war between the two great forces of good and evil. It reminds one somewhat of the teachings of Zoroaster."

The young man seemed to pale slightly at the name. "I . . . I have read about his doctrines, of course. But if you'd completed your study of my teachings and published works, I think you'd find that my theory of evil holds that, as a force, it is a part of God, and is willed by Him — not that it is a separate and distinct power."

"Ob, come now, Mr. Zadig," Simon Ark said with almost a chuckle, "Thomas Aquinas disproved that idea seven hundred years ago. In case you're not

familiar with it I refer you to chapters 39 and 95 in Book One of his *Summa Contra Gentiles*. For a preacher of a new religion, you seem to be quite confused as to your own doctrine."

Douglas Zadig turned on him with blazing eyes. "I need not listen to these insults in my own house," he said, and turned from the room. Doctor Hager ran after him and followed him onto the front porch.

KINGSLEY AND Mrs. Brent seemed shocked at Simon Ark's tactics; I walked over close enough to speak to him without their hearing us. "Perhaps you were a little hard on the fellow, Simon; I'm sure he means no harm."

"Whether he means harm or not, the fact remains that false teachings like that can always cause harm."

Doctor Hager returned to us then, and through the window we could see Douglas Zadig walking off across a snow-covered field, his open jacket flapping in the breeze. "He's gone for a walk," the doctor informed us; "he wants to be alone with his thoughts."

Simon Ark walked to the window and watched him until he was out of sight over a hill of snow.

"Really," Mrs. Brent said, "I think you owe him an apology when he returns. In his own

way, he's a great man."

Simon Ark turned from the window and faced the four of us. "Have any of you ever heard the story of Kaspar Hauser?" he asked quietly. And when he saw our blank expressions, he went on, "Kaspar Hauser was a German youth of about sixteen, who appeared suddenly in Nuremberg in May of 1828. He was dressed as a peasant, and seemed to remember nothing of his past life. In his possession were found two letters, supposedly written by the boy's mother and his guardian. A professor in Nuremberg undertook his education, and he remained there and in Ansbach until his death in 1833. Twice before his death, while he was living with the professor, he suffered mysterious wounds; and his death from a stab wound while he was walking in a park during the winter has never been explained."

Doctor Hager spoke from between tightened lips. "Just what are you driving at?"

"I am suggesting that Douglas Zadig's life, his appearance out of nowhere in England ten years ago, his friendship with you, doctor, and even the two odd wounds he has recently suffered, follow very closely the life of Kaspar Hauser."

Mrs. Brent was still beside me, and her fingers dug unconsciously into my arm. "Perhaps

you're right. What does that prove?"

"Don't any of you see it?" Simon Ark asked. "This man we all know as Douglas Zadig has no life of his own. Everything he has done and said has been done and said before in this world. He bears the name of a fictional character from French literature; he teaches a doctrine of a man dead nearly three thousand years, and he lives the life of a man from the nineteenth century. I don't propose to explain it — I am only stating the facts . . ."

There was silence when he finished speaking, and the four of us who were with him in the room looked at each other with questioning glances. There was something here which was beyond our understanding. Something . . .

Doctor Hager broke the silence. "How . . . how did this man . . . this Kaspar Hauser die?"

"He was stashed to death while walking alone in a park. There were no other footprints in the snow, and yet the wound could not have been self-inflicted. The mystery has never been solved."

As if with one body our eyes went toward the window where last we'd seen Douglas Zadig walking. And I knew there was but a single thought in our minds.

Doctor Hager pulled a coat

from the closet and threw it over his shoulders. "No, not that way," he said, giving voice to the fear that was in all our minds. "He'll come back the other way, at the rear of the house."

WE RAN OUT, Hager and Simon Ark in the lead, closely followed by Kingsley, Mrs. Brent and myself. We gave only a passing glance to the single set of footprints leading off over the hill, and then we ran around the back of the big white house.

It was cold, but somehow we didn't notice the cold. We saw only the snow — clear and white and unmarked ahead of us — and far away in the distance across the field, the lone figure of Douglas Zadig walking back toward us.

He walked quickly, with the steady gait of a young, vigorous man. The thin layer of snow did not impede his feet, and his short jacket flapped in the breeze as if it were a summer's day. When he saw us, he waved a greeting, and seemed to walk a little faster toward us.

He was perhaps a hundred yards away when it happened. He stopped short, as if struck by a blow, and his hands flew to his left side. And even at this distance we could see the look of shock and surprise on his face.

He staggered, almost fell, and then continued staggering toward us, his hands clutching at his side. "I've been stabbed," he shouted. "I've been stabbed." And already we could see the bloody trail he was leaving in the snow . . .

Doctor Hager was the first to break the spell, and he dashed forward to meet the wounded man, with the rest of us in close pursuit. When Hager was still some twenty yards from him, Douglas Zadig fell to his knees in the snow; and now the blood was reddening his shirt and gushing out between his fingers. He looked at us once more, with that same surprised expression on his face, and then he toppled over in the snow.

Hager was the first to reach him, and he bent over and quickly turned the body back to examine the wound. Then he let it fall again and looked up at us.

"He's dead . . ." he said simply . . .

We knew it was impossible, and we stood there and looked down at the impossible and perhaps we prayed.

"He must have been shot," Eve Brent said; but then Doctor Hager showed us the wound, and it was clearly that of a knife.

"He stabbed himself," Charles Kingsley said, but I knew that

Kingsley didn't even believe it himself. There was no knife in the wound, no knife back there in the snow; and Hager settled it by pointing out that such a wound would be difficult to self-inflict, and impossible while the five of us watched him.

We went back to where the blood-stains started, and searched in the snow for something, anything — even the footprints of an invisible man. But there was nothing. The snow was unmarked, except for the blood-stains and the single line of footprints.

And then we stood there and looked at the body and looked at each other and waited for somebody else to say something.

"I suggest we call the local police, or the state troopers," Simon Ark said finally.

And so we left the body of Douglas Zadig where it lay in the snow and went back into the house. And waited for the police.

AND WHEN they came — a bent old man, who was the local barber and also at times the constable, and a wiser one, who was the town doctor and also its coroner, we knew no more.

Could the wound have been inflicted by someone on the other side of the hill, before he came into view? That was my question, but the half-formed theory in my mind died

even before it was born. The blood had only started at the point where we'd seen him grip his side; and besides that both doctors agreed that such a wound would cause almost instantaneous death. It was a wonder he'd even managed to walk as far as he did.

And presently the barber, who was the constable, and the doctor who was the coroner, left, taking the body of Douglas Zadig with them.

Simon Ark continued to gaze out the window at the occasional snowflakes that were drifting down from above. Mrs. Brent and I managed somehow to make coffee for the others, but for a long time no one spoke.

Presently I heard Simon Ark mumble, "The man from nowhere . . . Nowhere . . ." And seeing me watching him, he continued, "Dear, beautiful death, the jewel of the just! Shining nowhere but in the dark; what mysteries do lie beyond thy dust, could man out-look that mark!"

When he saw my puzzled expression, he explained, "The lines are not original with me. They were written back in the 17th Century by Henry Vaughan."

"Does that tell you what killed Douglas Zadig out there in the snow?"

He smiled at me, something he rarely did. "The answer to

our mystery might better be found in Shakespeare than in Vaughan."

"Then you do know!"

"Perhaps . . ."

"I read a story once, about a fellow who was murdered with a dagger made of ice."

"That melted and left no trace? Well, you'd hardly expect a dagger of ice to melt when the outside temperature is below freezing, would you?"

"I guess not," I admitted.

"But if it wasn't done in any of the ways we've mentioned, then it must have been supernatural. Do you really mean that Douglas Zadig was possessed of the devil?"

But Simon Ark only repeated his favorite word. "Perhaps . . ."

"I don't care," Charles Kingsley was saying, in the loud voice I'd come to expect from him. "I'm not a suspect, and I don't intend to stay here any longer. I came because I believed in the teachings and writings of Douglas Zadig; now that he's dead there's no reason for me to remain any longer."

Doctor Hager shrugged and gave up the argument. "You're certainly free to leave any time you want to, Mister Kingsley. Believe me, this awful tragedy strikes me a much greater blow than anyone else."

Mrs. Brent had taken out a checkbook and her pen. "Well, I'll still give you the money as I promised, Dr. Hager. If noth-

ing else, perhaps you can erect a memorial of some sort."

I could see that she was serious. I had known Douglas Zadig for only a short time on the final day of his life, but I could see that he'd had a profound effect on the lives of these people and others like them. To me he had been only a name half-remembered from the news stories of ten years ago, but to some he had become apparently the preacher of a new belief.

AND THEN Simon Ark spoke again. "I would like you people to remain for another hour if you would. I think I will be able to show you the manner in which Douglas Zadig died."

"If you can do that," Kingsley said, "it's worth waiting for. But if there really is some sort of devil around here, I sure don't want to stay."

"I promise you that I'll protect you all from the force that struck down Douglas Zadig," Simon Ark said. "I have one question, though: Dr. Hager, do you keep any chickens here?"

"Chickens?" Hager repeated with a puzzled frown. "Why, no; there's a place down the road that raises them, though. Why?"

"I wondered," he replied, and then he would say no more. After that, he disappeared into a

remote section of the house and the four of us were left alone. We knew that the state police would be arriving before long, to continue the investigation; and I could understand why Kingsley and Mrs. Brent were anxious to get away.

They were beginning to grow restless again when Simon Ark reappeared, this time holding in his hands the small ansated cross he always carried. "If you people will accompany me outside, I believe I will be able to show you how Douglas Zadig met his death."

"You mean you know who killed him."

"In a way I suppose I was responsible for his death," Simon Ark answered. "The least I can do is to avenge it..."

We followed him outside, to the snow-covered field very near the spot where Douglas Zadig had died just an hour earlier. The four of us paused at the edge of the snow, but Simon Ark walked on, until he was some fifty feet away from us.

Then he stood there, looking up at the bleak November sky and at the distant trees and mountains. And he seemed to be very much alone...

He held the strange ansated cross above his head, and chanted a few words in the Coptic language I'd come to know so well.

From somewhere a large bird

swooped in a giant circle overhead. It might have been an eagle, or a vulture, lured north into the cold weather by some unknown quirk of nature. We watched it until it disappeared into a low brooding cloud bank, and then our eyes returned to Simon Ark.

He still stood there, chanting in the strange tongue, as if calling upon some demons from the dark past. He stood there for what seemed an eternity, and what must have been the longest five minutes of my life.

And then it happened.

Again.

He dropped his hand suddenly to his side, and when they came away we could see the blood. He took a single step forward and then collapsed on his face in the snow, one outstretched hand still clutching the ansated cross.

We rushed forward behind Adam Hager, and I could feel my knees growing weak at the sight before us. Simon Ark, whom I'd come to think of as almost an invincible man, had been struck down by the same force that had killed Douglas Zadig...

Dr. Hager reached him first, and felt for his heart. And then...

... In a moment I'll never forget. Simon Ark suddenly came alive, and rolled over in the snow, pinning Hager beneath him.

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And we all saw, in Hager's outstretched helpless hand, the gleaming blade of a thin steel dagger . . .

"THEY WERE just a couple of small-time swindlers who came close to hitting the big money," Simon Ark said later, when the State Police had taken away the cursing, struggling figure of Dr. Hager.

We were back inside — Kingsley, Mrs. Brent, several police officers, and myself — and listening to Simon Ark's explanation. Somehow the tension of the past few hours was gone, and we were a friendly group of people who might have been discussing the results of the day's football games.

"It's always difficult to imagine yourself as the victim of a swindler," he was saying, "but I saw at once that Zadig and Hager had invited you two here for the purpose of getting money from you. We might never know how many dozens were here before you, people who'd read Zadig's book and written to him. If you'll check further, I think you'll find that the book's publication was paid for by Zadig and Hager, and that most of his speaking engagements were phoney, too — like his occasional limping."

"He did ask us for money to carry out various projects," Kingsley admitted.

"As I've already told you,"

Simon Ark continued, "the very fact that his name, his life, and his so-called doctrine were copied from the past made me suspect a swindle of some sort. There was just nothing original about the man; his was a life copied out of an encyclopedia. I suppose after he met Hager in London, the two of them thought up the scheme. I imagine you'll find that Hager has tried this sort of thing before under various names."

"But what about the murder?" Mrs. Brent wanted to know. "Why should Hager kill his partner in crime?"

"I fear it was because of my arrival. My detailed questions about Zadig's teachings caught them both off guard; and Hager, especially, knew that I might uncover their whole plot. When I mentioned the parallels between the attacks on Zadig and Kaspar Hauser, as well as those between the doctrines of Zadig and Zoroaster, Hager knew I was getting too close. When he and Zadig went out on the porch together before, I imagine they set up the final act of the Hauser drama, in which Zadig was to be wounded by a devil that had taken possession of him. I suppose this was the final try for the money, and perhaps they'd done the whole performance before."

"Only this time it was real," I said; "this time Hager really killed him . . ."

"Correct. You'll remember it was Hager who asked how Hauser had been killed — and Hager who got us out of the house, so we could have front row seats for the final act. The actual mechanics of the murder are simple, once you know they were both swindlers. There's an old trick among confidence men — I believe it's called a 'cackle-bladder' — a small membranous bag filled with chicken blood or the like, which the swindler crushes to his body in order to appear wounded, after his confederate has fired a blank pistol at him. Douglas Zadig, walking toward us across the field, simply burst the bladder on his side and did a good job of acting. Hager, who naturally was expecting it all, easily managed to move fastest and reach the 'body' first. At this point, to make it look as realistic as possible, Hager was to wound Zadig slightly with a spring-knife hidden up his sleeve . . ."

HE PAUSED, and we remembered the scene in the snow; and the horror of what was coming dawned on us all.

"And then, while Douglas Zadig braced himself so as to remain motionless when the knife cut into him, his partner released the spring knife up his sleeve, and sent the steel blade deep into Zadig's side, straight for the heart . . ."

Charles Kingsley stirred slightly, and Mrs. Brent was beginning to look sick. But there wasn't much more, and Simon Ark continued. "Both doctors told us such a wound would have caused almost instantaneous death, and that made me wonder about the wounded man walking as far as he did. Anything's possible, of course, but it seemed far more likely that Hager had killed him as he bent over the body."

"But," I objected, "why did he have the nerve to try to kill you in the same way? When you pulled the trick with the chicken blood he must have realized you knew."

"It wasn't chicken blood," Simon Ark corrected with a slight smile. "I was forced to use ordinary ketchup, but I knew Hager would try to kill me, even though he realized I was only waiting to grab the knife from his sleeve. He had no choice, really. Once I was on to his trick, I had only to explain it; and an analysis of the various blood stains on Zadig's shirt would have proved me correct. His only chance was to be faster with his spring-knife than I was with my hands. Luckily, he wasn't, or you might have had a second impossible death on your hands."

He said it as if he meant it; but somehow I had the feeling that his life had never really been in danger. I had the feel-

ing that it would be awfully difficult to kill Simon Ark . . .

AND SO WE departed from the little town in Maine, and journeyed back toward the slightly warmer wilds of Manhattan. A search of the house had turned up nearly a hundred thousand dollars in contributions from Zadig's followers, and we began to think that Hager had possibly been thinking of that, too, when he plunged the knife into his partner's side.

"One thing, though, Simon," I said as the train thundered through the New England night. "Just where did Douglas Zadig ever come from? What happened in that London mist ten years ago?"

"There are things that are never explained," he answered simply. "But several explanations present themselves. The copy of the novel in French suggests — now that we know the man's true character — that

even at this early age he was trying to fool the public into thinking him French instead of English. I don't know the real answer, and probably never will; but if a young man had avoided military service during England's darkest hours, he might well have had to think up a scheme to protect himself in a postwar world full of returning veterans."

"Of course!" I agreed. "He was a draft-dodger; that would explain why his fingerprints weren't on file with the army, or elsewhere!"

But Simon Ark was gazing out the window, into the night, and he replied in a quiet voice. "There are other possible explanations, of course, but I prefer not to dwell on them. Douglas Zadig is dead, like Kasper Hauser before him, and there are some things better left unexplained, at least in this world."

And after that he said no more about it . . .

A Game of Chess

(continued from page 53)

the left, like a tall tree hesitating before its fall. To save himself he crouched.

"Mercy! Mercy!" he cried. "I have been punished enough. I killed the man, but his death was sudden, and not fiendish torture like this. I have been punished enough."

"Not so," said the old man. "An eye for an eye."

All self-control abandoned the victim. From his crouching position he sprang like a tiger. Almost before his out-stretched hands touched the polished metal his body straightened and stiffened with a jerk, and as he fell, with a hissing sound, dead on the chessboard, the old man turned the lever free from the

fatal knob. There was no compassion in his hard face for the executed man, but instead his eyes glittered with the scientific fervour of research. He rose, turned the body over with his foot, drew off one of the boots, and tore from the inside a thin sole of cork.

"Just as I thought," he murmured. "Ob, the irony of ignorance! There existed, after all, the one condition I had not provided for. I knew he was protected the moment he stepped upon the second square, and, if his courage had not deserted him, he could have walked unharmed across the board, as the just, in mediaeval times, passed through the ordeal of the red-hot plough-shares."

The Darkness On Fifth Avenue

by Murray Leinster

THE MOON was shining brightly in Central Park that summer evening in 192— as Police Lieutenant Hines went at a leisurely pace toward his home. He'd been at a party, and it had been a tiresome one, as far as he was concerned.

The gravel under his feet crunched and crackled. He pulled a cigar out of his pocket and lighted it. The path curved and recurved. It came out at the edge of the lake and followed along its shore. And the moon was rising high above the

The clipped, precise voice said, "Look at the moon." And as they watched, the moon went

out

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MURRAY LEINSTER, Dean of Science Fiction Authors, is the most widely-known pseudo-onym of Will F. Jenkins. He was already well-known for such tales as *The Runaway Skyscraper*, *The Mad Planet*, and *The Red Dust*, when he submitted this story to FLYNN's detective story magazine. It could have appeared there, but Ancovy was clearly the better place for it — particularly in view of the squawks the author had in mind, such one more wildly "scientific" than the last.

tall apartments that line Fifth Avenue. Its light flickered and shimmered on the water in small, irregularly-shaped lambent flames.

Hines slowed down and stopped, to look at it. Shrubbery on every hand, silvered by the moonlight. The rising shores of the farther side of the lake were made queerly glamorous. The throbbing, rumbling murmur of the city all about him came as a curious incongruity. It seemed particularly odd because the wavelets of the lake were running up on the shore edge with small lapping noises, and it seemed that the city should be thousands of miles away. And Hines could hear the heavy, rather monotonous splashing of the huge fountain at the end of the Mall, but it sounded like a waterfall.

"It is pretty, isn't it?" said a girl's voice behind him.

Hines turned around. A girl was sitting on a bench, quite alone. She couldn't have been speaking to any one else.

She lifted her hand as if in a gesture for him to sit down beside her. He couldn't make out her face, but the slim silken legs were shapely in the moonlight, and the dress was fresh and cool.

Police Lieutenant Hines smiled to himself. Being attached to the detective bureau, he never wore a uniform, and he was off duty anyhow. He said unapproachfully, "Sister, I'm a cop. You ought to be careful."

But the girl chuckled. She clasped her hands together and laughed; and then she chuckled again.

"But, Mr. Hines, it isn't against police regulations to speak to an acquaintance in the park, is it? Or do you deny my acquaintance?"

Hines stared and suddenly flushed.

"I'm Kathryn Bush," said the girl on the bench, still amusedly. "Remember me, now?"

"Oh, Lord, yes!" said Hines. "I'm not bunting copy tonight," she assured him, with a bare trace of malice. "I came out to be by myself and look at the moon and be stupid and romantic. The combination's necessary, isn't it — stupidity and romance?"

HINES puffed at his cigar.

"I was wondering myself," he admitted ruefully. "I just came from a party. The girls were pretty and stupid, and the music was stupid and pretty. And I didn't have a good time. I've been enjoying myself more, just looking at the moonlight, than I did at the party."

There was a little pause.

"Sentiment on the Police Force," murmured a soft voice. "Police Lieutenant Hines Discovered Moon-Gazing, Famous Vamp-Proof Detective Prefers Chaste Luna to Chasing Flappers. Special to the STAR."

Hines stiffened and groaned. That was the exact method Kathryn Bush used in her column in the STAR. She could make any man ridiculous; and she could twist her column to the bitterest and most sarcastic tragedy when she chose.

"Don't!" said Hines desperately. "Please! I'd . . ."

"I wouldn't," said the girl. But she chuckled. "It wasn't even a temptation. Don't worry. I like you much too well. You do play fair, Mr. Hines, and you get fair play in the city rooms. I was sorry, afterward, that I treated you as I did."

She'd served him up to her delighted readers after the Paulson murder case, which he'd handled. On the whole she'd let him off easily. He knew it. She'd been no worse than gently malicious about one or two of his personal traits — enough to let

people who knew him rag him.

There was another pause.

"I fibbed when I said I came out here to be alone," she said suddenly. "I had a sort of hunch that something was going to happen. Intuition, if you like. I don't know — I get hunches sometimes. When I saw you, I knew I was right. You generally manage to be where things are happening, too. What's going to happen?"

"Nothing that I know of," said Hines. He was relieved by her promise not to use him again in her column. "I was just walking home. That's all."

"Then," she said comfortably, "you'd better sit down. Something is going to happen. It always does."

Hines sat down. The waves were lapping almost at their feet, on the other side of the path. A park light glowed perhaps twenty yards away. Now and again the soft purring of a motor car on one of the automobile roads came to their ears.

"What do you think will happen?" asked Hines, mildly amused.

"I don't know," she admitted. "It's just a feeling."

THE PURRING of a car came near. It was a heavy, powerful car, and the singing of its tires was as loud as the noise of its motor. It was moving slowly — very slowly. It went by the bench hardly more than fifty

feet away, on the other side of a planting of shrubbery. A voice came suddenly from it, a trifle muted by the distance and the car's movement.

"Heil! How long's it goin' t' take yuh?"

Hines stiffened. He knew that voice, but couldn't place it. Somehow he'd had dealings with some time. A crook's voice.

"I'm ready now."

That second voice was clipped and precise. Hines frowned to himself. He didn't know the second voice at all. But the first was — was — somebody he knew, and somebody who was wanted.

"Jam on the brakes, Pete," ordered the voice he knew. "He's goin' to try it now."

Brakes squealed, thirty or forty yards away. The park was very quiet indeed. It seemed as if the two on the bench could even hear movements within the softly purring car.

Hines felt the girl looking up at him. He was listening, while he racked his brains for a name.

"I think it must be happening," she said detachedly. "My hunches do work out sometimes."

The harsh, precise voice reached them. "Look at the moon."

Involuntarily the girl raised her eyes. The full moon was swimming in a sea of stars. It was big and bright and smiling . . .

It went out.

Pitch darkness fell instantly.

Hines was on his feet in a second. He felt the girl's hand tighten convulsively on his arm. He unbuttoned his coat unobtrusively, seized his service revolver.

But he was staring about into a blackness which was exactly that of a moonless night with a sky full of thunderclouds. The suddenness of the fallen darkness was horrible. Its completeness was terrifying. The silence, all about became ghastly.

There was no noise except the lapping water and the sound of a powerful motor idling at low speed a little way off, and a tiny sound which was not even a whisper — the vagrant night breeze stirring the leaves of the trees and shrubbery.

The silvery moonlight was cut off, absolutely. The moon had gone out. The stars had ceased to exist. Yet, dimly — very dimly — the opposite shore of the lake was visible. Its outline was sharp. And flickers of what could only be moonlight came from there, bright and vivid and scintillating. Hines flung his head back once more. The sky was blotted out exactly as if someone had suddenly placed a roof over a part of Central Park.

Then a voice came from forty or fifty yards away. The clipped, precise voice of the second man in the car.

"Satisfied?" It was almost a snarl of triumph.

"Yeah!" came the first voice again. It was awed, and it was

exultant. "Plenty! If y' c'n do the rest y' say, it's a cinch!"

THE DARKNESS lifted, exactly as if someone had turned on soft lights with a switch. The moon shone down again, round and benign and placid, swimming in a sea of stars. There was the minor roaring of a heavy car going into first speed, second, and away.

Hines suddenly uttered an exclamation. "Lefty Dunn!"

The girl beside him was shaken. Her grip on his sleeve showed that. The abrupt and complete darkness and its equally complete and abrupt removal, had unnerved her. But she shook herself a little and became the newspaper woman again.

"It happened," she said coolly, in a voice that quavered only a little. "But what was it?"

"That voice was Lefty Dunn," said Hines grimly. "I thought he was in Chicago. He's wanted — for murder, among other things. If he'd known I was sitting here, he'd have taken a chance on trying to plug me, with a good car for a getaway. He has no particular reason to love me."

"But the darkness!" said the girl sharply. "What was that? And why was it done?"

Hines looked at her blankly for an instant. Then he searched the sky. From horizon to horizon the stars shone out through the smoky haze which the city it-

self interposes between itself and heaven. There was no trace of cloud, no trace of any mistiness which was not of the city's own production.

"I thought . . ." Hines knitted his brows, and then said impatiently, "I don't know what it was, but I've got to get word in that Lefty Dunn's in town. He's . . . Good Lord!" He stared at her. "Did you hear those voices in that car, and what they said?"

"Of course!"

He took her elbow and began to march her along the path at a rate that forced her to trot a little.

"Lefty said, 'When are you going to be ready?' and someone said they were ready then. And that second voice said to look at the moon, and the moon went out. And then somebody, the same voice, asked if Lefty was satisfied." Hines was talking almost feverishly and increasing his pace toward the Mall. "Do you see what it means?"

"I see," said the girl practically. "that tomorrow afternoon I have a headline, *Moon Turned Off in Central Park*, and some wisecracks about cruelty to petters in the city's recreation spaces."

HINES WAS hastening his pace almost to a run. The path they were following branched. One branch led out to the smooth automobile roadway. The other meandered on about the lake.

Hines fairly dragged the girl down the shorter branch, toward the nearest police phone.

"Please don't!" he said sharply. "It is too serious for that — much too serious! Lefty Dunn's a dangerous man. He's one of the very few men who can organize criminals into co-operation. Don't you see that if we aren't crazy, both of us . . ."

Lights swept the ground before him. A horn honked in a startled fashion. There was a swoop and a rush and a bumping noise, and Hines jerked the girl with him as he flung himself backward.

A huge car flashed by so swiftly that its back mudguard flicked at the girl's sheer skirt.

A voice came back from it. "Get t' bell outer the way!"

The car was gone, and Hines was staring after it and reaching into his pocket, his lips compressed.

"Things are happening," said the slightly shaky voice of the girl beside him. "Thanks. They weren't a bit careful, were they?"

"That's Lefty Dunn's car again," said Hines grimly, "and I got its license number, which may mean nothing at all."

The car was speeding away, smoothly and silently, its headlight beams visible through mist and dust-swirls.

Hines began to write swiftly; but the girl caught at his arm again.

"Look! Oh, look!" she gasped.

The automobile roadway branched, ahead, and there were two cars with gleaming headlights coming down toward the intersection. Each one was perhaps twenty yards from the point where they would be visible to each other.

Lefty Dunn's car slowed down; and suddenly, before it there poured out a dense cloud of blackness. It was not smoke. It was not dust. The headlights of Lefty Dunn's own car bored into it and were smothered instantly, without being dissipated or reflected. It did not waver, as a mass of smoke or vapor would have done.

Dunn's car was going ahead still swiftly, though at less than its former rate, and it did not run into the darkness. The darkness kept on ahead! It seemed even to have a definite cone-shaped form.

Now the intersection of roads, and the traffic policeman at that intersection, and the tall hillock of earth behind it which had been brilliantly illuminated a moment before—everything was blotted out utterly.

From that incredible oblivion came a terrific crashing noise. Instantly thereafter the darkness vanished. The headlights of Lefty Dunn's car shone pitilessly upon the scene. One car had its nose halfway into the chauffeur's compartment of the other. Both of them had been shud around by the shock.

A woman began to scream shrilly in one of the cars. A man dragged himself out of the other. The traffic policeman ran to the spot, blowing on his whistle.

Lefty Dunn's car swerved to avoid the wreckage, took the right-hand road, and swept on out of sight.

There was nothing in the least peculiar about the rest of it. It was merely an automobile accident, and an ambulance arrived and administered first aid, and a long time later two derrick-cars arrived and towed the crippled machines away; and there was only a puddle of oil and a few splinters of glass left to show that anything had happened. The only thing at all odd was that the traffic cop and all the occupants of both cars insisted that they had simultaneously been stricken blind for a few seconds before the crash, and that that blindness had been the cause of the collision.

2

HINES left the office of the commissioner of police next morning with his jaw tightly set. In his own car, on the way back to his office, he swore softly but luridly; and he went into his office with an expression in which impatience was the least disagreeable ingredient. The commissioner of police had been incredulous and at the last impatient himself. The com-

oration of the traffic cop had been dismissed as a very clumsy alibi for carelessness. Even the park policeman who had seen the moon go out for two minutes withered under the commissioner's sarcasm. Hines sat down at his desk and swore steadily, getting madder the longer he thought about it. He knew what he had seen. Two other members of the police force backed him up. A total of seven people in two cars which had been smashed up made exactly the same statements. And the whole thing was dismissed as a pipe dream.

It was only when disgust began to take the place of wrath that he noticed a report on his desk. He'd given orders that the license number he had noted down should be traced. The report was laconic, in the usual form. The license had been traced to Oliver Wetmore of — Central Park West. Mr. Wetmore was in Europe, and the car, a Pierce-Arrow, was in storage. The reporting officer had examined the car in the storage garage and found the license plates missing.

"Stolen," said Hines grimly. "Anybody who went to put a car in storage or take one out could have taken them. Somebody did. It's a dead end; but it proves, anyhow, that whoever was using 'em last night is crooked."

He called headquarters and succinctly repeated the report, asking that all officers on beat be ordered to look out for the number and report it by police phone. Within half an hour every uniformed man on the streets of New York would be watching for it, among other things. Those other things would include twenty-seven small lost children; five runaway girls, with descriptions attached; seventeen stolen cars — license numbers given; anywhere from four to fifteen fugitives from justice; and a philosophical anarchist.

It did not look especially promising. Hines knew it. But he also knew that the famous police dragnet sometimes has its inexplicable successes. Meantime he made some telephone calls.

The Museum of Natural History referred him to the research bureau of the American Electric Company. After twenty minutes of more or less patient waiting he had an anonymous specialist in research physics on the wire, who listened with amused patience to his account and then told him tolerantly that what he had seen was impossible. Light could be neutralized, to be sure. Monochromatic light could be altered by another monochromatic wavelength to a non-visible color. And interference would neutralize even sunlight, but only by the use of partial reflection, which was only

practicable under laboratory conditions.

Hines thanked him politely and hung up.

"But, dammit, I saw it!" he growled.

THE PHONE rang as he prepared to make still another call. It was Kathryn Bush.

"Good morning," she seemed to be amused. "Have you been told you're crazy?"

"I have!" said Hines grimly. "So have I," she laughed. "But I have a news item for you. It wasn't used anywhere, but it's news. Get a pencil and write it down."

Hines pulled a memo pad into place. "Ready."

She read slowly. There is a vast amount of news that goes into newspaper offices, and more especially into the press associations, which is either unimportant or improbable and never sees print.

"Edginton, New York. This town has heard a lot about freak weather, but Elias Rowe, of Stony Mountain, makes the latest contribution. Mr. Rowe drove over from Stony Mountain today to ship two calves and buy supplies. He reports that Stony Mountain is getting the fanciest brand of summer weather yet. He first noticed it a month ago, when as he was plowing his north twenty field he noticed a grateful shade. He looked up and saw the sun shining brightly,

but with most of its heat missing, and the sky much darker than usual. He went home and put on his coat.

"Nearly every day since then he's been getting fancier weather. He reports that yesterday it was pitch-dark for over half an hour in his barnyard, so dark that even with a lantern he couldn't see to water his horses at dinner time. He was inquiring how long these here eclipses were going to keep up, but when assured that nothing of the sort had been seen in Edginton, he drove home muttering about city wise-crackers. Local wits assert that Stony Mountain has either an inferior brand of sunshine or a very superior brand of moonshine."

"Got it," said Hines laconically. "What about it?"

"It's about a month old," came the voice over the wire. "I was wondering if it didn't refer to some experiments with apparatus that might—er—turn out the moon."

Hines stared. Then, "It sounds like it," he admitted. "I'll look up Edginton . . ."

"I have," said the voice in the receiver, comfortably. "It's a little hamlet of about three hundred people, away upstate. Stony Mountain isn't a village. It's a mountain, with no more than two or three houses within miles. A splendid place to do experiments of this sort in."

"Thanks. You ought to be on the force."

She laughed once more.

"Oh, this stuff is a bribe. I expect to be given the inside, when you find out what's up."

"Something's up, all right," agreed Hines grimly. "Lefty Dunn had those two cars smashed up just to see if he could, I'm thinking. The moon business was a test, the wreck was an experiment."

She rang off, and Hines read the clipping over again. It did look foolish in one way, and it looked important in another.

This clipping had been discarded from the news because it was impossible. And what Hines had seen had been termed impossible by a scientific authority. And yet, if Hines wasn't crazy, he'd heard Lefty Dunn ask somebody to give a demonstration of some sort, and the demonstration had been the putting out of the moon.

Considering what had happened later, it seemed probable that some piece of apparatus had been pointed upward into the air, from the car in which Lefty Dunn was riding. Later the same car had shot out a beam of darkness straight ahead of it instead of upward, and that beam had blotted out its own headlights, the headlights of two other cars, and a park light just over a traffic officer's head. It was at least conceivable that the production of an accident

had been another demonstration.

But the question before Hines was, why had Lefty Dunn been chosen as the person to be convinced that a certain apparatus could throw a beam of darkness in any chosen direction from a car? What had he meant when he said, "If y' can do the rest y' say, it's a cinch?" What else had the man with the clipped, precise voice claimed he could do? Was the beam of darkness ahead of the car the thing in question? Was . . .

THE PHONE rang sharply. "Hello!"

"Lieutenant Hines, a report on the license number you queried." Clickings, and the fainter voice of a patrolman on beat, making his regular report at the box telephone. "The car with license 41166, sir, is parked just off Madison Avenue on Fifty-Eighth Street, sir. It's been there two hours, sir, and I tied a ticket to the steering-wheel and made a note of the number and recognized it as one to look out for."

"Still there, eh?" asked Hines.

"Yes, sir," said the faint and far-away voice. Hines could hear the rumbling of traffic in the police telephone transmitter.

"Keep an eye on it. Lefty Dunn was riding in it last night," said Hines briskly. "I'll be there in fifteen minutes."

He hung up and instinctively felt beneath his coat for the regulation revolver. Lefty Dunn

would be a dangerous man to arrest. If the street was crowded it wouldn't be wise to try it unless they could jump him so he wouldn't have a chance to pull a gun.

The little police runabout had no outward indication of its official status. But there was, if you noticed it, a certain sequence of numbers that you never saw on any but police cars. Neither the first numbers nor the last ones were involved, but if a car broke all traffic rules and the traffic cop ignored it, and you could discover no sign about it anywhere that explained its exemption, why the letter designation on the license plates was "C," and the next to the last two figures were three and six.

Honking impatiently, the little runabout threaded traffic, crossed against traffic lights with a certain confident impunity, and went streaking up Madison Avenue. Hines was driving, and he was in civilian clothes, of course. His companion smoked languidly as the car darted northward.

Its horn blew impatiently as the patrolman on beat dawdled past. He looked unhurriedly, and made an inconspicuous motion with his hand. Hines drew up to the curb, stepped out, and stopped the patrolman with exactly the air of one asking for information.

"In front of the Blowbar Building, sir," said the uniformed

man. "Been there about two hours, now. The tags on the steering-wheel."

"Right. Thanks."

Hines went leisurely to the corner. He saw it at once. The car of the night before, powerful and gleaming and insolent, standing before one of those incredibly slender eighteen-story buildings that spring up on narrow frontages in New York. The building was new. Next to it an old-fashioned, sedate brownstone house still stood blowily, with a "Furnished Rooms" sign visible in the front parlor window. There were three other houses just like it, and then a massive building of six or seven stories that went on to the end of the block and Park Avenue.

Hines went briskly across the street, turned into the office building, and scrutinized the floor directory carefully, as if he were looking for a name and was puzzled at its absence. Nothing. The lobby was merely a gowen-marble entryway to the building, and a means of communication with its two elevators, both now aloft. There was no one in sight at all. From inside, however, Hines could look the car over thoroughly. It was a Packard, not a Pierce-Arrow, and he was justified in making an arrest on account of the false license plates alone. The street, too, was by no means crowded, and while gunplay

would not be desirable, it could be risked.

HE WENT out of the building and saw his companion from the roadster strolling toward the corner. The patrolman idled negligently near by. And then, quite suddenly, there was the clashing of elevator-doors from the building he had just left, and four men came out. Hines looked at them swiftly, recognized two of them. He thought he recognized a third. The fourth was Lefty Dunn.

He signaled with his hand. His companion and the patrolman drifted his way as the four men moved to the car and stood a moment, talking, beside it. The door of the blowy brownstone house opened and a man came out of it. He was a tall, blond individual with flowing yellow whiskers. He came down the steps to the pavement.

Hines saw a nod pass among the men beside the car. One of them climbed into the chauffeur's seat and pressed on the starter. Hines unbuttoned his coat. And suddenly his whistle shrilled.

It was not quite quick enough. He blew it instead of opening fire, but even a shot would not have been quick enough. The three men beside the car had jerked glittering things out of their pockets. The sharp barking of automatic pistols cut through the shrilling of the



He fired blindly into that sudden, mysterious black void.

whistle, and the tall man shuddered suddenly and began to collapse slowly to the pavement. The automatics barked.

Suddenly everything went dark. One instant Hines had been hurtling himself toward the huddled group of three men who were pumping lead at an evidently intended victim. The next instant he was careering through a blackness that was utterly opaque. He could not see the ground below him, or the sides of the street, or the sky. He felt the pavement striking the soles of his feet, but otherwise he might have been lost in the abyss of nothingness.

The whistle went on shrilling eerily in the darkness. In that

absolute opacity before him a man cursed, and someone began to shoot at random. A bullet stung the skin of Hines's arm. He shot savagely at the sound. There was no flash to shoot at. He stumbled on the curbstone as some one squealed. A voice was roaring orders, and the exhaust of the big Packard boomed. Caroming wildly on, Hines struck a man. He fell on him savagely, striking viciously as the man collapsed, twisting an automatic from the unseen fingers and

flinging it away. The man writhed and was still.

The voices were almost on top of him. Hines shot furiously at the space below them. Then a clash of gears, so near that he put out his hand. Something brushed against it and was gone. He knew the feel. He had reached out and touched the moving tire of the car at the curbing. He had been so close that but for the blackness he could have leaped into it. It roared away, sharply, swiftly...

There was silence except for the traffic noises, and startled, excited exclamations. The patrolman was blundering about.

"Lieutenant! Lieutenant Hines!"

"Here!" snapped Hines. "See how far this damned darkness extends. I've killed a man, I think, and they killed another one first."

"It stopped at the corner," said the plainclothes man dazedly, blundering toward Hines in the blackness. "I came into it because I heard you shooting, sir. What..."

Hines swore again. He'd struck a match, which had not seemed to light, and he'd burned his finger on the invisible flame. He struck another, now, and held it carefully closer and closer to his eyes. At four inches he could just distinguish it. At two inches its flame was clear. He

thought he could see his finger in the light.

But he began to feel the man underneath him. His victim, no doubt. A sickish feeling came over him as he felt something warm and wet on his fingers. He felt unspeakably ghoulish, squatting there in the darkness. The hair rose at the back of his neck.

With an infinitely slight sensation of flickering, the darkness vanished. The street, the sky, the buildings on every hand flashed into view. There was a dead man under him, and his hand was stained red, and there was another man lying quite still on the pavement a few yards away, and the patrolman was in the act of blundering against a brick wall. The plainclothes man was fumbling his way with outstretched hands through broad daylight.

Hines stood up. He wanted to be sick, and he was filled with a vast and incredible rage. Two other uniformed men were running toward the spot.

"Get an ambulance," snapped Hines savagely. He looked in the direction in which the big car had disappeared. It was no longer in sight, of course. It had turned into Park Avenue and was mingled indistinguishably with the other traffic. "Take a look at that man there. See who he is. I'm going to look in this building."

HE TURNED into the office building. An elevator was coming down. The doors slid open as he reached out his hand to touch the summoning button. A broad-shouldered man with a professional Vandyke and a professional-looking bag in one hand and suitcase in the other, stepped out.

"Can you tell me what that shooting was?" he asked harshly. "I'm a doctor, and I thought I might be needed. You're hurt! Here, let me fix it."

"It's not my blood," snapped Hines. "There are two men out in the street who need looking after. I'm a police officer."

He dismissed the elevator-passenger summarily and fixed the operator with his eye. Hines should have been more tactful. He should have been less official and much more pleasant. But he was human, and he was wild with rage at the knowledge that he had been squatting on the pavement within a yard of a car into which murderers were fumbling their way, and while they shot ahead, out of the arbitrary zone of darkness, and so to an accomplished escape.

"Y-yes, suh!" gasped the man. He turned several shades lighter when he saw a glistening reddish stain on the hand that pointed a grim finger at him.

"You know the clients of this building. How many offices have been rented lately - with-

in a week or two, or a day or so?"

"A-ain't but one, suh." "Take me there, in a hurry," said Hines savagely. "Speed!"

It was clear enough. The four men who had come out of the building had timed their exit for the emergence of the man they'd shot. They must have been in some office in the building from which they could see the brownstone rooming house, and possibly even into, say, a skylight room. When the man they intended to kill put on his hat and approached his door, they had started for the street.

Moreover, Hines had been able to look into the Packard fairly thoroughly, and it had contained nothing but the cushions. There was no sign of any complicated apparatus for the production or a direction of a beam of any sort. The darkness must have been sent down from some point in this building.

The operator was trembling visibly, but the doors swept shut with a swift hissing sound and the car abruptly shot upward. If the stopping-point of the elevator had not been automatically controlled, it is certain that the operator could never have made a reasonably accurate landing. The glass doors slid aside.

"Th-ther y' are, suh." "Which door? Wait here!" The pebbled glass of the in-

icated door was unmarked and plain. Hines tried it, standing behind the solid wall. No sign. The door was unlocked. He flung it wide and stepped within.

THE OFFICE was small and empty of all furniture, and was dusty as if it had been left unoccupied for a long time. One or two nails in the wall, and a few untidy smudges upon the paint were evidences of some previous occupant, but the only sign of its last inhabitant was a half dozen radio B batteries near the window with wire terminals still affixed. The red sealing-compound tops were bright and shiny and untouched by the dust which lay heavily upon the floor. And there was a smell of tobacco in the air. More, it was tobacco which had not had time to stale.

Hines jumped to a conclusion. He put his head out of the window. A short blast on his whistle made the patrolman's head swing back. Two other uniformed men had arrived at the spot where shots and a police-whistle blowing indicated something wrong.

"Nobody to leave this building!" shouted Hines through cupped hands. "Hold the doors until I get down!"

He went swiftly back to the elevator. The operator trembled again.

"Who rented that office?" he

snapped, "and how long had he had it?"

"M-mistuh Preston, suh. He-uh-be rented it las' week, suh. Said he was a doctuh, suh, but his furniture ain't come in yet. He was in heah a coupla hours today, suh, an' some frien's of his, jus' went out 'bout five minutes ago."

The elevator began to sink rapidly toward the ground floor.

"What does he look like?" demanded Hines. "When did you see him last?"

"Uh - you seen him, suh. He got outter the car an' spoke t' you, suh, when you got in."

Hines clenched his hands and ground his teeth. Memory came to him enragingly. The voice that had asked what had caused the shooting, and that had offered to bind up his supposed wound - it had been the same voice that had spoken in the car with Lefty Dunn the night before.

The instant the elevator doors opened, he knew the futility of pursuit. The shots had been fired all of three or four minutes before. A crowd had already gathered and was surging closer and closer about the uniformed men who now struggled to keep the two dead men from being trampled on by the merely curious crowd. The square-shouldered young man with the Vandyke and suitcase had walked out into that crowd and vanished. There were plen-

ty of taxicabs about. He was undoubtedly sitting comfortably in one of them and being driven to a destination which might be any of the million homes in Greater New York.

Hines nodded despairingly to the plainclothes man who had essayed to guard the door and keep the occupants of the building from leaving until Hines's arrival.

"That darkness was made by a man in an office on the fourth floor," said Hines bitterly. "He was working with Lefty Dunn to kill that other man, and he's got away. Oh, my God! What a fool I am!"

3

HINES'S self-disgust bled until the ambulance left and the crowd had dwindled to a mere sprinkling of sightseers who pointed out to each other where the two men had been standing when shot, and other argumentative persons who debated with much vehemence and no information whatever on whether or not the reported cloud of darkness had actually been present.

The man with the yellow whiskers was breathing, but that was all. He needed surgical attention in a hurry. He was rushed to a hospital. The same ambulance took away a huddled figure in very natty clothing and a sporty cap to whom surgi-

cal attention would be of no use at all.

There would be only commendation for Hines for shooting that second man. In the case of a feigning any policeman or private citizen has the right to shoot if it is necessary to prevent a crime. And Hines, as a police official, was relieved of the citizen's dilemma of being a criminal if he possessed the means to shoot.

The dead man was Micky the Dope, wanted by several States and by the Federal government in addition. Decidedly, Hines had come out of the affair with credit.

But he was bitterly disgusted with himself. He had more than a hunch, now, that there was much more at stake than merely the shooting down of a still unidentified man. There was, it was very clear to Hines, more involved than the capture of Lefty Dunn.

Hines was the only man in New York who could have nipped those possibilities inherent in the settlement of darkness down upon parts of Central Park the night before. He was the only man in New York who could have nipped those possibilities in the bud. And he had let the man with the clipped, precise voice walk right past him after speaking to him.

"There's going to be hell to pay before we get him," he groaned, "if I know Lefty Dunn

and if I guess right what that man's got."

He waited impatiently for the fingerprint wagon and rushed the photographer and the fingerprint technician up to the deserted office with the radio batteries on the floor.

"There'll be fingerprints on those batteries," he announced. "At least two sets — the man who sold them and the man who handled them in here. I want to know which is which, and the best set of prints you can cook up of that second man. And here, by the window." He pointed. "Here on the sill, and right here where a man'd steady himself when he looked next door. There were five men up here, I think, and they were watching for a man to get ready to go out. I figure they were all here waiting for him."

"Yes?" said the fingerprint man. He yawned. The detective bureau was always demanding improbable things, and sometimes its members got mad when the fingerprint bureau upset all their ideas. "Anything else you want?"

Hines managed to grin.

"Plenty," he admitted. "The commissioner thinks I'm crazy. If he finds out I dragged you up here — when the shooting happened down in the street — he'll be sure of it. I want proof that Lefty Dunn was here this morning, and Micky the Dope — that's the man I plugged —

and Joe the Greek, and I think Pete Lazzarini. The last two have records, but they aren't being looked for. Lefty and Micky were supposed to be out of town. Now, will you find those prints for me?"

"If they're there," said the fingerprint man.

He yawned again. But he would work a good deal harder because of the appeal. There is no man on the force who does not enjoy setting the commissioner — whoever he may be — gently and respectfully in his place. He is the head of the Police Department, to be sure. But he is a political appointee, and in the last analysis, he is a civilian. And it pleases a man in the department to let him discover it.

The fingerprint man dusted a little of his grayish powder about the B batteries and blew very gently. He surveyed the result with satisfaction.

"Pretty," he said pleasantly. He went over to the window and went through a slightly more involved process on a small area.

"Plenty of prints here," he said boredly. "All right, lieutenant. These prints are new ones, and some of them are very nice ones. I'll have photos ready in two or three hours, but I can't promise they'll be untangled right away. That'll take time."

With a sigh of relief, Hines left. He debated an instant down

in the lobby of the building. He ought to . . . But the man in the hospital might recover consciousness. It was most important of all that he tell who had wanted him out of the way.

Trace down the man with the motive, and sooner or later Hines would trace down the gunmen themselves. And if he traced down the gunmen, sooner or later he'd find out who had flung on a curtain of darkness at a remarkably convenient moment. And if he caught that man, he'd have forestalled a number of undesirable happenings he began to feel more and more sure were in the wind.

It wasn't very imaginative, perhaps. It would be extremely laborious. But it was common sense. And nine-tenths of the success in this world is gained by using common sense and plenty of work.

At the hospital the blond man was still unconscious and Hines was impatient.

"But he may come to any moment," the surgeon told him comfortably, peeling off rubber gloves that went up to his elbows. "I took a chance. Unconscious, no response to stimuli, severe shock. No need to give him anesthetic shock besides. I had an ether-cone handy, but he didn't murmur while I worked on him. Much better off. He can talk as soon as he comes to, instead of your having to wait an hour."

Hines was thinking busily. His eyes hardened.

"Any chance of his living a few days?" he demanded. "Long enough to do some identifying if I catch a man I'm looking for?"

The surgeon chuckled comfortably.

"He should live ten years," he said placidly. "A bullet glanced off his skull, and there's not even concussion. Another went through the fleshy part of his shoulder. A third just missed his knee-tendons — a narrow thing, that. He'll be able to walk out of here in three or four days, most likely. He was lucky. Why was he shot at?"

"That's what I want to find out," said Hines.

"Go up to his bed, then," said the surgeon. He slipped out of his operating gown. "Thank Heavens, I'm off duty now. Somebody else adjusts the mangled ones from now on."

Hines was pacing impatiently up and down the corridor outside the ward when an idea struck him. He examined it warily. Then he called a nurse. In five minutes the still unconscious man was shifted to a private room, and his clothes were brought in.

Hines was going busily through the pockets and frowning savagely at the lack of identifying data when there was a knock on the door. A nurse put

her head in and said, "The young lady you were expecting."

HINES'S face was blank when Kathryn Bush came in. "You're not playing fair!" she said, her eyes stormy. "I had to fib to get in. But the press must be served. I told them you were expecting me. I guessed you'd be here. How is he?"

"Knocked cold," said Hines. "That's all." Then he added exasperatingly, "But look here . . ."

"Look here?" she echoed reproachfully. "I'm responsible for your getting the leads in this affair from the beginning. If I hadn't had a hunch and gone to the park, and if I hadn't risked arrest by speaking to a police officer who happened to be moon-gazing, and if I hadn't kept him talking to me, he'd never have known a darned thing was out of the way! And I gave you some important stuff this morning. It wasn't fair to hedge."

"Good Lord!" said Hines irritably. "It came too fast. I didn't have time to do anything. Certainly not to telephone you . . ."

"Oh!" She seemed mollified. "You would have phoned me if you could? That's all right. Now, what happened? A wild account of mysterious shootings, and darkness in broad daylight, was phoned in, and I grabbed the

assignment. Threatened to weep all over the city editor's desk if he didn't give it to me. So I'm handling this for the STAR. It sounded too insane to be true, but I knew better, especially when I heard you were in it. What really did happen?"

Hines went back to his investigation of the clothing, while he told her jerkily about the whole thing. She listened tranquilly.

"The city editor wouldn't believe it," she said placidly. "As an assignment it is a dud. I told him about the moon and the accident last night and he looked at me as if he expected me to say I was Mary, Queen of Scots in one minute more. I blushed. Actually, I blushed! I felt proud of that blush afterward. Something of youth has survived even the city room."

Kathryn was possibly twenty-two or three, but whatever Hines might have intended to say, it was interrupted by a nurse. She came in, bent over the bed, and glanced up.

"He's conscious."

Hines moved swiftly to the bedside. Bland, clear blue eyes looked up at him above the rather incredible yellow whiskers. A booming voice said without emotion, "I have been conscious for some time. *Verdammt!* Is that what happened?"

THERE WAS a distinct accent in his speech, but his sen-

tence-structure was the careful accuracy of the educated European, tinged, presently, with exotic colloquialisms.

"If you heard me talking," said Hines, "you heard what happened. Yes. I'm Police Lieutenant Hines, and I want to know some things. Please try to tell me who you are and who you think wanted to have you killed, and why."

"In spite of the very deffil of a headache," said the booming voice from the bed, "I have been trying to think of the answers to those questions for at least five minutes. I saw the gentlemen who shot at me, yes. You, Herr Hines, were running toward them when I fell. But I never saw any of them before at any time. And I am *verdammt* if I know why they should shoot I shall give it my attention. Maybe I shall think it out. How much am I hurt?"

"Not badly," Hines assured him. He was biting at his lips and frowning in thought.

"Tell me," said Kathryn suddenly, smiling down at the bandaged man on the bed. "Were you ever in a place called Edginton, New York, or a place called Stony Mountain?"

The candid blue eyes turned to her, but they were wide with astonishment.

"Young lady," said the booming voice plaintively, "as a sci-

entist I haff refused to admit magic into my considerations. But how in der name of forty-seven deffils do you know that I came from there only a short time ago?"

Kathryn was twinkling triumphantly at Hines. He grunted. "You win," he said briefly. "Go on."

"Who worked with you up there?" she asked. "I think he had you shot."

"Breston? No. He is a scoundrel in his way, and I do not like him. But he is a good scientist, and I haff no quarrel with him."

Hines grunted at the name. "Preston: he's about thirty-five," the detective said shortly, "very broad-shouldered, and he affects a Vandyke beard. His voice is rather harsh, and he speaks very precisely."

The wide blue eyes swung blankly to him. "I think I will haff to call on more than forty-seven deffils," the booming voice said more plaintively still. "*Himmel!* You know everything. That is him. Do I need to say that my name is Schaaf . . ."

Kathryn looked up. "Oh! You made the direct measurements of the size of a molecule."

The yellow-headed man blinked.

"I nearly starff to death," he observed, "because there is in America no way for a theoretic physicist to earn a lifig. No-

body has efer heard of me. And I am shot at hy utter strangers, I wake up in hospital — I must be in a hospital — and a young lady tells me where I haff been, a gentleman describes to me a man I most prifately dislike, and then I am reminded of a relatively unimportant mistake I made six years ago."

Hines grunted impatiently. "Preston's the man who had you shot, all right. And I think I know why. Professor Schaaf, it all works down to this. Up in Edginton you were working on the production of darkness, the neutralization of light . . ."

"No. Not I. I merely did measurements for Breton. He offered to gife me passage-money back to Europe if I did them. He got them cheap. Measurements of der mass and dimensions of der atmospheric ion, and changes in der mass and volume of der molecule when der allotropy of ionization took place."

"Well, then, Breton, or Preston, he was working on the neutralization of light . . ."

"Ach, nol On der production of fluorescence in ionized bodies under der influence of short Hertzian wafes. Wait — yes, I suppose you could say that. It is not scientific, hut you might say that. When his apparatus finally got working it gafe off darkness that was like der bottom of hell."

Hines emitted a grunt that

was almost explosive. "Hal Now we're getting somewhere! He has an outfit that makes darkness. It was used to help his gunmen escape when you were shot at, and I have excellent reason to think it's going to be used for more criminal purposes still."

"Criminal? It was pure science. Theoretic science. Der fluorescence of ionized substances under der influence of short Hertzian wafes. Does that sound like a help to safe-blowers?"

Hines drew a deep breath and began to talk. When he mentioned the shutting off of moonlight in Central Park, Schaaf nodded rapidly. He seemed to have lost surprisingly little strength.

"Yes. He could do that. He was working on a beam apparatus when I left, so that der darkness would be gifen off on one side only. He could not read der instruments before."

THE ACCOUNT of the automobile accident that seemed to have been deliberately produced made the yellow-bearded man frown angrily. When Hines had given a succinct account of Lefty Dunn's police record and the ambitions he might be expected to cherish, Schaaf was rumbling in his beard.

"Hm . . . I see. I see. Maybe I can help you. Maybe I can't. I try, anyhow. I did not like

Breton. He made me mad. When I saw der success of his experiments come about I said, 'Breton, I congratulate you. Der Atchison medal is der same as yours. If you carry on your work as splendidly as this, it may be efen that I shall yet read of you as a Nobel Prize man. You haff der disposition of a dyspeptic crab, hut you are a great scientist and I congratulate you from der bottom of my heart.' I said that to him, in spite of der fact that he had made me mad. And he laughed at me. 'Atchison medal?' he said in a sneering sort of way, 'Nobel Prize! Schaaf, you are a damned fool. I am for bigger things than that.' And I turned around and left him. I thought he must be crazy."

Hines said curtly, "With Lefty Dunn's organizing ability, he might pick up anywhere from a hundred thousand dollars to half a million within the next week, in New York City alone."

Schaaf blinked.

"Maybe, then, he is not crazy. You tell me, anyhow, he tried to get me killed. Hm — Lieutenant Hines, you send somebody to my room at that abominable house where I liff. Get eferthing out of it. Eferthing. I have papers of my own, and there are some memoranda of his that I took by mistake. I had intended to send them back to him. It was by accident that I took them. We will begin to

see what we see. I haff an idea, maybe. A small idea, hut it is an idea. And I will need all that I can findt about his figures."

Hines looked at the girl. She had been listening. But a good reporter, these days, does not go about with a pencil and a pad of paper. With soft shirts and soft cuffs in vogue, he does not even write on his cuffs. And Kathryn had no cuffs, anyhow.

"I'll go myself," said Hines briefly.

"I'm going to post a guard at your door in case anybody has heard that you're still alive. My own opinion is that it would be wisest for you to die."

Schaaf blinked, and then smiled wryly. "Ach, yes. It is better that I die. For der sake of my health, let us say. Fery well. I haff expired, and while you do get der things from my room I will think der wise deep thoughts of der defunct."

Kathryn smiled at the man in bed and followed Hines from the room.

"I'm coming, too, if you don't mind," she announced, in the hall outside. "As a news story, this is a dud. Even if the STAR printed it, the other papers would laugh. But I want to follow up what happens, because if Lefty Dunn and his friend Preston do use that darkness, I'll have the whole story for the STAR while the other papers are just guessing. You see?"

"I do," said Hines, relieved. "It shouldn't be printed just now. I was trying to think of some way to persuade you to kill it, so far as publication is concerned."

It took less than five minutes to get two uniformed men on guard outside the yellow-bearded man's door, but it took ten to arrange that if any inquiries were made, by telephone or otherwise, the answer would be given that the bearded man shot on Fifty-Eighth Street had died without regaining consciousness.

"Schaaf knows too much about what Prestoo has developed," said Hines dryly. "Of course Preston wants him killed."

Then the little police runabout went sliding through traffic down town again. The finger-print car had vanished from before the Blowbar Building. Hines let his mind linger hopelessly on the possibilities finger-prints might offer if they turned out well. He went up the steps of the blowsy brown-stone house. An angular woman with her head in a towel opened the door.

"I'm Police Lieutenant Hines," said Hines briefly. "A lodger here was shot about two hours ago and taken to hospital. I've come to take charge of his effects."

He displayed his badge. The woman wiped her hands nervously.

"O' course you can go up," she said uneasily. "O' course! But his things have been took. A friend of his came an' said he'd helped put Mr. Schaaf in the ambulance, an' Mr. Schaaf was very likely hurt bad, and he paid the room rent that was due an' packed the things up, an' 'bout half an hour ago he sent a taxi for the things that were left. He said Mr. Schaaf would be in the hospital for a long time an' he'd take care of them for him."

Hines's jaws snapped shut. "He was a broad-shouldered mao," he said grimly, "with a beard like a doctor."

The woman nodded, relieved. "Yes, sir. He'd been to see Mr. Schaaf before, sir, but he missed him."

"Who'd did be come in, today?" demanded Hines.

"Why, right after the ambulance left, sir."

Hines ground his teeth. "I'll look at the room," he said savagely, "but it's no use."

It was very clearly useless to look in the room. It had been stripped clear of everything but the furnishings plainly provided by the house itself. The bureau drawers were emptied. The suitcases one would expect any transient to possess were gone.

"That was Preston," said Hines to Kathryn Bush with a savage calmness. "He was in here, packing up papers and such things, while I was in the

building next door. He was probably in this room when I stopped on the sidewalk, not certain whether to come here or go first to the hospital. Nerve? That man has it!"

"And you think . . ." said Kathryn.

"He'll bleed New York dry," snapped Hines. "He'll make the police force a laughing-stock."

4

THE SHOOTING of an unknown man who died without regaining consciousness was not bigtime news. The curtain of sheer darkness which eye-witnesses swore had blocked the whole of Fifty-Eighth Street for nearly five minutes would have been bigtime news had anybody believed in it.

Reporters who questioned Hines got noncommittal answers, found out that of the two men killed one was a well-known gunman previously supposed to be in Chicago, and let it go at that.

The fingerprints satisfied Hines completely and convinced the commissioner finally, but that bit of evidence was not made public. So the killing got an average of a quarter-column on an inside page in that afternoon's papers; the curtain of darkness was either not mentioned or was referred to as a smoke screen left behind by the fleeing car, and the whole

affair was summed up as a New York reflection of a probable Chicago gang-war.

Schaaf grimaced when he read the accounts three days later. Hines had moved him from the hospital to his own apartment, and the big German was recovering rapidly. And as his strength came back a certain grimness came with it.

"Breston," he explained firmly, "is a scoundrel. He stole my records, which I had intended to publish. Those records are important. *Himmel!* I had an entirely new method of measuring. Der amplitude of der Brownian movement in a dilute electrolyte enabled me to calculate der ion-masses perfectly. I had proof of der multi-atomic nature of der molecule of six supposedly simple substances, by der demonstrable extra weight of der ions. Sooner or later I shall find Breston, and I shall exterminate him! I haff all my work to do over again, and right now if somebody offered to sell me der whole city of New York for six cents, I couldn't buy enough dirt to stop a watch."

Kathryn chuckled.

"I've an idea, Professor Schaaf," she said encouragingly. "When this thing breaks, you're going to get publicity. You're dead right now, of course, but when you're resurrected you'll be famous. And when you are famous . . ."

"When you are famous, eben if you are a fake," said Schaaf pessimistically, "der laboratories fall offer themselves to offer you a salary. All right. You make me famous, Miss Bush, and you, Mr. Hines, giff me a chance to practice *Schrecklichkeit* on that *verdammte* Breston."

He retired behind a cloud of smoke with every appearance of gloom. But presently he was explaining, in answer to Kathryn's questions.

"Breston does not make darkness. Not directly. He has found that ionized particles are fluorescent under der influence of certain short Hertzian wafes. And there are ionized particles eferywhere. Especially where there is dust. Fluorescence is der property of absorbing light of one wafe-length — one color — and radiating out light of a longer wafe-length, another color.

"You take rhodamine dye, for instance. You throw ultra-violet rays upon it. Der ultra-violet rays are a color so far past der blue end of der spectrum that it is infisible. But when they strike der rhodamine, they are absorbed and radiated away again as light of der most fiffid of scarlet. Well, under influence of Breston's short Hertzian wafes, der ions on dust-particles and in der air absorb all der colors of fisible light. And they radiate it away again as infisible colors we call heat,

which is so far past der red end of der spectrum that you can't see it.

"Ordinary air contains enough ions to cause der absorption of practically all der light in der room. A laboratory with Breston's apparatus in it gets as dark as der bottom of hell, and after awhile it is as bot as hell's chimney."

Kathryn rose.

"I'll call on you," she said soberly, though her eyes had devils of mischief in them, "to give me a special interview. *Thermometry in Hades, Famous Savant Measures Ultimates in Heat and Discusses Refrigerating Rooms for Red-Hot Mamas.*"

"Laugh," said Schaaf pessimistically, "but laugh in print, Miss Bush, and I won't complain."

He lapsed into a depressed silence as Hines and Kathryn went out.

"He takes the loss of his notes pretty seriously," said Hines, frowning. "So do I. He might have been able to work out something to neutralize the infernal thing."

"It's still hanging fire?"

Hines opened the car door for her. "Still," he said grimly. "We can't locate Lefty Dunn, but we do know that half a dozen of our most prominent gunmen and gangster-leaders have met him. We offered one

of them, in particular, to forget about two of his most useful murderers if he'd come across with information that would enable us to nab Preston and Dunn. But he insisted he didn't know what we were talking about. The commissioner soft-pedaled the newspapers, but he's convinced. There were too many eye-witnesses to the last stunt."

"And so?"

"We're passing out word to all the big jewelers to put paste in their shop windows, and the banks especially have been warned to take extra care."

The little runabout was running swiftly down upper Broadway. The parked center-spaces with the air-ducts for the subway beneath were flowing by at an even, regular rate. Columbus Circle appeared dead. The facade and canopy of an uptown motion-picture palace swept by to the right.

A heavy gray car jerked suddenly out into the traffic and came purring up to a space no more than ten yards behind the runabout.

Quite silently and quite suddenly everything was blotted out. One instant the runabout was speeding along with Hines frowning abstractedly at the wheel; the next it was rolling through an opaque blackness that was so sudden that it stung the eyes. The girl gasped in her seat beside Hines. All the world

was obliterated. The girl beside him ceased to exist; the wheel in his hands and his hand themselves could not be seen.

For perhaps three seconds there was stunned silence everywhere; then a multitudinous squealing of brakes, a scared squawking of horns.

The runabout shuddered as Hines jammed his foot down hard on the accelerator. It shot ahead through nothingness. There was a peculiar little lurch. He had swung imperceptibly to the left, and his left-hand tire had just slipped down the tiny drop of the surface-car rail that parallels the parked spaces on upper Broadway.

"We're all right for a block or more," he snapped into the blackness all about him. "I'm following the car track, and all's clear for at least that distance."

He drove on and on. Brayings and bellowings arose on every band. Every car in motion had stopped stock-still and its driver was sounding his horn desperately. Every man, it may be, believed he had been stricken blind. Certainly no man dared attempt to drive.

Hines eased the car to a stop. "Get down in the bottom of the car," he said quietly into the nothingness that surrounded him. "I don't think they'll risk coming this far in the dark, but get down."

He felt the little car respond-

ing to her movement. Then with a sudden flickering, the light went on again.

PEDESTRIANS, groping hysterically for something solid to hold on to in their inexplicable blindness, grew dizzy and dazed at the sudden restoration of their sight. Drivers of many cars burst into speech which varied from the ludicrously prayerful to the grotesquely profane.

But Hines had whirled about in his seat and his service revolver was out and ready. The sudden return of light dazzled his eyes for a moment, but he saw a big gray car that had not quite stopped turn abruptly and dart off into a side street. It was crowded with men. It was the car that had pulled out from the curb and followed along some ten yards behind him.

With a grimace that was not in the least mirthful, Hines put his revolver away.

"Fooled 'em," he said harshly. "But I think hell's to pay today. This was half an accident."

Kathryn scrambled to her seat.

"I was s-scared," she said quietly. "Very much. But I only got down there because you told me to, and so you could shoot anywhere you wanted to. I didn't get down there because I was s-scared."

"They saw me drive by," said Hines grimly. "Lefty Dunn has reason to dislike me. And I killed one of his men the other day, when they shot Professor Schaaf. So when they saw me they pulled out into the traffic behind me. They figured I'd do what everybody else would do when the blackness fell — jam on my brakes and blow my horn. And they'd come up to the car, turn off the darkness, fill me full of holes, and turn on the darkness again when they moved to a corner and turned down it. They could have sighted their way easily enough in two seconds of brightness. But I stepped on the accelerator instead."

The traffic was a nerve-racked, hopelessly disorganized mass of shaky drivers. Drug stores were being packed with clamorous people demanding a doctor's attention. Women had either fainted or were fainting all about. Because of the incredibility and consequent non-publication of the three previous uses of the darkness-producing device, every person who had been in the darkness considered that he had suddenly gone blind.

Hines jammed on his brakes again and fought his way into a drug store. He made two calls — using his police badge to force a way into the phone booths — and fought his way out again. The first strictly individual panic began to give way to a stunned

amazement as people discovered that not only themselves but every one else had been blinded at the same instant.

The runabout circled Columbus's statue and went streaking down Seventh Avenue.

"I called headquarters," said Hines savagely, "and reported that I thought the whole works would come off within an hour or so. I admitted it was a guess, but Dunn and Preston are in a car fitted up to make darkness, and they aren't taking chances for fun."

"Please!" said Kathryn imploringly. "Please don't put me out of the car to make room for a detective. Please don't! If you're right I'm going to realize my life's ambition and scoop the town. The first things I learned in newspaper work were that there isn't any Santa Claus, and scoops don't happen any more. But please let me stay in this car!"

Hines shot on down town.

"Headquarters said the Merchants' National is moving three-quarters of a million in currency some time this morning. That will be Lefty Dunn's meat, if he can make it. When I stop the car you find a place to take cover."

A small, firm hand closed over his arm ecstatically. "You're a darling!"

HINES DODGED a truck which an unshaved driver

seemed to think had a divinely bestowed right of way over such trivial vehicles as police cars, private autos, and street cars. The runabout swung east at Thirty-Ninth Street.

"I phoned Schaaf, too," said Hines jerkily. "Told him I thought the darkness just now was intended to get me, but that I didn't believe it was planned. Just that they'd caught sight of me. He agreed, and said if things went dark there he'd crawl under a bed. They'd have to turn off the darkness to find him, and he'd have a chance to get some of them. He's enthusiastic and hopeful."

"He's rather a dear," said Kathryn exuberantly.

There were a series of staccato poppings to right and left. Half a dozen motorcycle police dived through the traffic and shot ahead, weaving in and out, in a dead run for Fifth Avenue.

"There's proof the commissioner's convinced," said Hines dryly. "He's afraid not to be."

He grunted in annoyance and swung in to the curb again.

"What's the matter?"

"I proposed that patrols of four or five men be put at strategic points down town, wherever being able to turn on the darkness would offer a killing. The darkness is shot out in a beam ahead of the car. The back part of the car that makes the darkness will be visible, as we saw in the park. And if we have

a patrol closing in on the edge of darkness, wherever it may be, they'll spot that car."

He had dived out of the run-about and was plunging in to use a telephone again. Kathryn remained seated, her eyes shining. She began to visualize headlines, a by-line on the first page, photographs.

Then, quite suddenly, she realized that the headlines she had imagined were hopelessly bad, from a newspaper standpoint. Police Lieutenant Hines would be featured in the story, of course, but his name and title would not—would definitely not by any chance be set in hundred-and-twenty-point type across eight columns.

He came out, frowning.

"They'd forgotten it. It seems certain to be Fifth Avenue. They're going to post men now."

HE SHOVED in the clutch and put the car in first. Fifth Avenue was only half a block away.

And there was a sudden flickering in the air, and then an obscure duskiness everywhere, and suddenly Thirty-Ninth Street ceased to exist about a hundred feet ahead of the car. There was a huge, thick wall of darkness that rose out of the earth and towered upward. For three seconds it loomed far above the tiny vehicles in the street, and suddenly it broke, and for three seconds more the

light showed again, and then the cylinder of darkness abruptly formed once more and held.

Hines jammed on the brakes, and the car stopped with a jerk. He stared at the impalpable barrier of opacity that rose a hundred feet in the air.

"It's turned on," he said grimly.

Kathryn stared. The blackness looked almost exactly like the section of a monster cylinder of black velvet. There was not a particle of flickering or wavering about it. It was steady enough to seem tangible. A touring car with the top down was exactly halfway into it, and a woman in the back seat began to scream. The car began to back, slowly, and emerged from the apparently solid mass of darkness. The chauffeur stared up at it, his face a sickly gray. He backed and backed, senselessly, until his car crashed into a parked car behind him.

The back cylinder curved gently, and up aloft it could be seen to have a less definite edge. Four stories up on the Lord & Taylor Building one could see a cobwebby darkness begin at the edge of a window, and deepen to the complete opaqueness of a solid barrier only at the other side of the glass.

Then a monstrous, muffled uproar began on Fifth Avenue. It was the horns of many, many thousand cars being sounded by panic-stricken drivers to prevent

their being run into while they could not see to drive. That moaning, discordant uproar began far down town. It extended far uptown again. It seemed to reach from one horizon to the other. And a vast column of impalpable darkness lay athwart the city. It seemed to grow in size as it went uptown. At Forty-Second Street it was definitely over a hundred feet in height. At Fifty-Seventh it was two hundred, but seemed less tangible. It was thinner at the edges. In the Eighties it seemed hardly more than a thick, dense smoke that made all drivers slow down to a crawl and careful drivers stop altogether. At One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Street it was a shadow only. Beyond the Bronx it was not noticed.

But from Madison Square to the Sixties a deep, discordant bedlam rose to the skies. The horns of thousands of helpless, stationary cars arose in a vast bellowing sound that seemed like a million-tongued cry of agony.

5

FIFTEEN MINUTES before, Fifth Avenue had been entirely normal, which is to say that it was crowded and picturesque. From curb to curb the asphalt was a solid stream of vehicles, going swiftly north and south in parallel lines, then halting abruptly for a space, and dart-

ing into swift motion again. The sidewalks contained their diverse populations.

About Madison Square, north of that small and isolated parking space the city fathers permit, there were openings in the wheeled traffic. And people could walk comfortably on the sidewalks, pausing to gaze into windows without being jostled; or they could hasten if they chose without jostling others.

Whistling young men in their later teens pushed wheeled boxes with a self-admiring dexterity from the location of one wholesale firm to the location of another wholesale firm. The occupants of the sidewalks were mostly men going from one place to another place.

Around Thirty-Fourth Street the character of the pedestrians had changed entirely. At least half the crowds on the sidewalks were women, and in consequence there was vast confusion and more than a little obstruction to anybody who had a definite destination. The wheeled traffic was a solid mass of gleaming vehicles, and a swift mechanical purring came from the space between the curbs whenever certain colored lights showed appropriate tints in suitable directions.

At Thirty-Ninth Street the pedestrian traffic was almost exclusively female, and most men moved west to Sixth Avenue if they were in a hurry. And a

surging, solid mass of motors rolled north and south in mechanical obedience to lights and whistles in their five-block units.

This was fifteen minutes before the event that made women who could afford it have nervous breakdowns, and gave other women less luxurious nightmares for weeks afterward.

At about that time taxicabs began to appear here and there on the side streets leading to the avenue. The taxis stopped anywhere within a block of Fifth Avenue and disgorged their fares.

Most of those passengers were youngish men, and nearly all were impeccably dressed, and a few of them had that curious bluntness of features that comes of many batterings in many battles. Some, however, were distinctly shabby and furtive-eyed. And there were a few figures who were not young at all, but old and bent and broken. But in all these anomalous newcomers to the avenue one common feature could be observed. All were eagerly expectant, and all were more or less uneasy, or at least in doubt.

But for the most part the arrivals passed unnoticed. A patrolman at Thirty-Seventh Street widened his eyes at sight of one little group of amiably chattering young men who smiled and talked and very curiously did not move their lips at all. That patrolman turned deliberately

about and strolled in their wake, swinging his night-stick and privately cursing the fact that so many women had not stayed at home that day, and that a policeman has so many duties entirely unconnected with the basic duty of his profession, and that he might lose sight of those young men if some fool woman stopped him to ask an idiotic question.

A traffic cop stepped over to a motorcycle patrolman resting on a still but chugging mount beside the curb.

"Better keep an eye on that car, Pete. I think I know the guy that's drivin' it."

And the motorcycle sputtered loudly and drifted off into the stream of vehicles.

A doorman outside a particularly exclusive store cocked a wise eye at a bent, white-be-whiskered figure trudging rather pathetically through the crowd, buffeted about by chattering women. The doorman was an ex-cop, and reflected inaudibly: "There's old Schmeel, out of stir again. He'll be gettin' in trouble if he tries his dip tricks in this crowd."

THESE OBSERVATIONS were made, it is true. But the vast majority of the new arrivals slipped unnoticed into the throng. Even the fact that a great many of them looked now and then at their watches passed without comment.

Of course, no one could have been expected to observe a gentleman who had rented desk-space three days before, in a front office overlooking the facade of the Merchants' National Bank. He was gazing intently out of the front office window, and he held an office telephone in his hand.

No one could have guessed that he was talking to a man in another office fronting on Madison Square. Nor would anyone guess that the man next to him with another telephone instrument in his hand was similarly connected with a telephone booth in a confectionery store just around the corner from Fifth Avenue.

A big gray car parked in the triangular parking space where Broadway crosses Fifth; it was not particularly observed, even though it was not empty of people like the other parked cars. And nobody at all noticed that the man at the driver's wheel was a broad-shouldered man with a professional-looking Vanddyke heard, or that he was looking intently up at a window in which a man stood with a desk telephone in his hand.

Fifth Avenue for its whole length was a picture of swift and colorful movement in the bright sunshine. From the sidewalks where women predominated a babble of voices arose with the shuffling sound of many feet in movement. From the

roadway came the booming, purring noise of many motors and the singing of innumerable tires. It was a highly picturesque and wholly normal sight.

But suddenly, one of the two men in the office facing the Merchants' National Bank said sharply, "It's in sight."

The other man spoke into his transmitter. A clumsy gray object had appeared in the flood of wheeled things flowing below. New Yorkers gave it no second glance. Armored cars, equipped with bullet-proof walls and tires, and armed with machine guns and hand-grenades, move regularly through the streets of New York. It is, you see, the most civilized city in the world, and therefore land battleships are necessary for the movement of valuables about its thoroughfares.

"Get movin'," snapped the man whose phone communicated with the phone-booth around the corner. "The cops are comin' out now. They're goin' to rush it."

He listened, hung up the receiver, and lit a cigarette. His hands trembled a little. Four policemen were issuing suddenly from the bank. But six young men were rounding the corner, five of them having just ceased a cordial conversation in a candy store lobby on having been joined by the sixth from within. The policemen more or less efficiently checked the flow of pe-

destrians. They had a clear path made from the bank doorway to the curbing at the exact instant that the armored car came to a complete stop. It was excellent, neatly timed work.

"It's stopped. Get set!" The man at the telephone to Madison Square was tense. He'd seen, too, the six young men among the milling, curious crowd that had been checked by the police guard.

The door of the armored car opened. Simultaneously, two men appeared in the doorway of the bank, carrying apparently heavy bags. They came quickly down the steps.

"Shoot the works!" snapped the man at the telephone. His voice was strained to the breaking point.

THERE WAS a breathtaking pause, just about long enough for a man in a window on Madison Square to make a signal with his hand, and for that signal to be acted upon by a man in a parked car. Then, quite suddenly, darkness—tangible, blank, and absolute—fell upon the earth. All visible objects were blotted out.

It held for three seconds. Then unbearable and unbelievable daylight flooded the world once more. A shot, two, three . . . Then darkness fell again in the same incredible quietness and with the same unbelievable intensity.

From the darkness there arose the sound of firearms crashing savagely. There were screams. And then from south to north, as far as the ear could range, came the discordant, throaty bellowing of automobile horns. Men, struck blind, jammed on their brakes and set their horns to bellowing. The tumult that arose was horrible and insane; it was insistent and terrifying.

The crashing of guns ceased. The crowded, stunned mass of people before the Merchants' National heard panting snarls, heard a voice gasp triumphantly, "Got it!" and then many of the blind, staggered people were hurled aside.

The bellowing horns of the cars were enough for orientation. Men and women who had stopped stock-still with their hearts in their throats at the sudden feeling of hopeless blindness upon them were hurled to the ground.

A compact group of panting figures was heading swiftly and ruthlessly northward, and battered its way through the dazed crowd until a shrill whistling sound was audible through the deeper toned bellowing of the horns. Those figures turned in their savage progress, then, and clutched at the man who blew that whistle. He chuckled. A blind man is a good guide in darkness. He went before them, tapping, down a side street.

Unbelieving people who stared

from bright sunlight at a monster cylinder of darkness that seemed to have engulfed Fifth Avenue saw six hatless young men come panting out of that darkness, dragging two heavy bags, saw them pile themselves into a waiting car, and saw that car plunge madly away from the darkness and the uproar that issued from it. And a blind man chuckled and went tapping his way back into the darkness.

That, though, was not the only occurrence which later showed that the darkness had not been unexpected. An old, bent blind man, returned from guiding panting gangsters to the light, went zestfully about his ancient trade. A dip, of all men, needs his eyesight second only to his nimble fingers. But here all men were blind.

There was the cushioned tapping of a stick amid all the tumult of blaring horns, and figures felt one brush accustomedly against them, and were too dazed to feel gentle but nimble old fingers abstracting here a wallet, there a watch.

Proprietors and clerks in jewelry stores fronting on the avenue heard the tremendous crashings of their plate-glass windows, and burelar alarms rang resoundingly, clanging clamorously even through the bedlam from without. Those clerks and those proprietors were entirely helpless to stop the clutching fingers that reached in and groped, and

left empty traps where treasures had been on view before.

One man was found dead with a knife wound in his back, when the darkness lifted, and he was known to be a person who had acquired a certain amount of wealth by very dubious means, but nobody ever found out who had preferred the opportunity of a safe revenge to the chance of robbing with impunity.

FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES Fifth Avenue was in darkness, darkness that was tangible and blank and absolute, and in that fifteen minutes forewarned persons of the underworld reaped a harvest. Each to his specialty, they smang like wolves in the blackness whose duration they foreknew.

The list of thefts alone filled two columns in the next morning's papers, and there were some persons badly hurt—mostly women, who clutched hysterically at hands that crowded about them. The list of smashed cars and traffic accidents was impressive. There had been three or four drivers who lost their heads and plunged madly through the blackness until brought up by insurmountable obstacles.

And since the underworld is the resort of people of all grades of mental distortion, there were one or two crimes that were quite too horrible to be reported in full.

But at the end of that fifteen minutes, with the barest possible trace of flickering, the darkness vanished as suddenly and as silently as it had come. The sunlight shone again upon borders of motors, blaring frantically, and upon streets full of people who abruptly charged frenziedly here and there the instant they could see to flee. There were small crumpled figures which were women who had fainted, and who were, quite frequently, inconspicuously robbed of purses and trinkets while the hysteria of the light returned still held.

In all this uproar a gray car moved quietly out of the parking space the city fathers still permit in that vast triangle of asphalt where Broadway crosses Fifth Avenue. The columnar — later it was proved to be the cone-shaped — beam of darkness that had been sent north from Madison Square had widened out at that spot.

For nearly two blocks in every direction the darkness had beld about Madison Square. So that the gray car moved undisturbedly out of the parking space, and turned, and went down the nearly emptied lower Fifth Avenue to Ninth Street, and there turned east and vanished.

And nobody seemed to notice that it was driven by a broad-shouldered man with a Vandyke beard.

THE STREET lamps glowed with a peculiar glitter upon pavements still wet from a recent rain. The rumbling of the city, which never ceases, had died down to that partially discordant muttering which is the city's voice in the small hours.

Kathryn came out of the doorway and shivered a little at the damp chilliness of the night air. But she smiled warmly when Hines held open the car door for her.

"It's decent of you," she said gratefully, as she stepped in and when the car started off. "I almost refused to get up when the telephone call came, but I'm glad I didn't. You think something's going to happen?"

Hines nodded. The little car was purring toward Broadway and swung into the nearly deserted but brilliantly lighted way. It began to shoot on down town with a singing of tires.

"Either we get him," he said tiredly, "or we'll have to throw up the sponge. I've never worked so hard in my life as I've done this last two weeks."

It was two weeks since a cone of darkness had lain along Fifth Avenue's length for fifteen minutes and left New York panic-stricken. In those two weeks Hines had been doing the work of at least six men. He was the only man in New York, aside from Schaaf, who would recog-

nize the man Preston. And Preston had to be found.

"Crooks are fools," said Hines dearly. "You'd think those yeggs that were tipped off about the darkness would have known how to take advantage of it. But we picked up six more men today that we'll be able to send away for long stretches. Fingerprints, of course. You'd think a man who was going to smash a jewelry store window, knowing he couldn't be interfered with, would have the sense to wear gloves. We've got the men who robbed Blakes' and Houton's and a couple of others. Their fingerprints were on glass fragments inside the windows. They'd cut their fingers on them and flung them out of the way as they groped for the stuff on the trays."

"But no trace of Preston?"

"None. Oh, we've done what we could. We've third-degreed and sweated every man we've picked up. We've had the station houses full, too. And we've worked. We've caught a bunch of the little ones, and recovered a good bit of property, and we have the goods on half a dozen fences we've been trying to get for a long time; but Lefty Dunn and his mob got away clean, and Preston with them — and they got three-quarters of a million from the Merchants' National in currency."

There was silence as the car sped on down the nearly de-

serted street, passing no vehicles except occasional brilliantly lighted taxicabs. It passed Columbus Circle, and a little later it passed Times Square, and still went on down town.

"I — I feel almost ashamed of myself," said Kathryn soberly. I tried to help all I could, when you were working to forestall Preston, but secretly I was almost hoping you'd fail. It would let me scoop the town. And it did. My salary was raised because I had all the story and Professor Schaaf's explanation of what the darkness was. But — it was terrible. And people are still afraid it will happen again."

"Why not?" asked Hines tiredly. "It can. We haven't a thing to go on. Schaaf's had the American Electric laboratories put at his disposal, and he's buzzing about there blissfully, talking about the possibility of heterodyning 'die verdammte short Hertzian wafes that cause der trouble.' But he's got to duplicate Preston's results before he can try to neutralize them. And so far there's been no reason why Preston shouldn't turn on his darkness anywhere in the whole city and make another clean-up at any minute."

"But there've been precautions . . ."

"Oh, yes. Sternutatory gases — sneezing gas bombs — in show windows, ready to be set off. Half-million-candle-power flares that will burn five min-

utes in every bank. That much light probably won't be absorbed by those ions Schaaf talks about. And guns. Most of all, there's the fact that people know what they're up against, and will fight back even in the dark. But I'm putting a lot of hope in tonight's work."

TWENTY-THIRD Street slipped by, and the humming motor of the little car went on steadily, headed down town. Union Square spread out abruptly to the right, with its lights glowing upon emptiness save for rare and straggling pedestrians.

"What's happening tonight?" asked Kathryn, as tall buildings shot upward on either side again.

"The banks have been working by non-negotiable paper more than ever," said Hines uninterestedly. "Wall Street went into spasms for awhile, but took to issuing certificates for its negotiable securities. Short of getting currency out of the Reserve Bank down there, it would be pretty difficult for Preston to make much of a killing where most of the money is. But money has to be shifted now and then."

"There's four millions in money and securities that has to be shifted tonight. It was intended to do it secretly, but we found the news had leaked. We think it leaked, anyway. And if it did, it leaked to Lefty

Dunn, and he'll make a try for it with Preston's help. We're going to try to step on it. I've helped with the preparations, Schaaf's helped more. He saw Preston's outfit up-State, you know, and he made a suggestion or two that looks promising. I'm going to park you with him, if you don't mind."

The car was far down town indeed now. Kathryn saw "Broome Street" brightly illuminated on a corner signpost. But the runabout went on and on, and the buildings grew taller and taller until the thin thread of sky overhead was almost lost between the desolate lean flanks of the structures on either hand.

Hines turned off to the right, stopped the car, and switched off the lights.

"We'll walk from here." He looked at his watch. "Half past three. Two hours to daybreak. You'll lose a lot of rest."

"I got some sleep," she said.

They walked on toward the Battery. Their pace seemed a crawl, after the swift flight of the little car, and they seemed rather to be moving through a cavern than any inhabited city, and the desolation of dead buildings seemed to press down upon them and appall them.

It was a long, long walk through a desert of brick and steel. Suddenly Hines turned in to a deserted doorway, and a voice spoke softly, and they followed a ball to where a shad-

ed electric bulb burned dimly, and Kathryn saw figures sitting in readiness for something. She could not know what.

There were one or two uniformed men among them, but the others looked strange indeed, and Kathryn could not distinguish the cause of their oddity. She was hustled into a tiny elevator that promptly began to rise to the steady humming of a hidden motor, through dark and unoccupied floors with the smell of emptiness.

The elevator stopped. A walk along a dark hallway to an open door. Into an unlighted room in which a pipe glowed and in which there was the sound of movement.

"Hines?"

"Right," said Hines briefly. "I've brought Miss Bush. She gave enough information before that affair of two weeks ago to have given us a chance to stop it. She's entitled to a front seat."

A VOICE growled. Kathryn smiled wickedly in the darkness. That was the commissioner, sitting up here in a darkened room.

"Ah, Miss Bush," Schaaf spoke amiably from the darkness. "You did not giff me der chance to thank you for making me famous. Come and share my window. Hines is going down into der street again."

She moved hesitantly through the darkness until he took her hand and pressed it. He led her

to the square of grayish light that was the window.

"We are ten stories up," he told her. "If you do not mind der height, look down."

She saw the street far below her, empty and gray and desolate, but peculiarly clear by reason of the shaded street lights.

"Der bank is opposite us," said Schaaf softly, as if afraid of betraying the presence of an ambush by normal speech. "You see der little lights inside. They half four millions of dollars ready to be mofed in an armored car, when it comes. They feel, Miss Bush, about that four millions of dollars as I felt about my notes on der proof of der multiatomic nature of der sodium chloride molecule. That four millions is fery precious to them, Miss Bush, though they will nefer spend a cent of it. Just as my notes were fery precious, though I could not spend them."

He craned his neck. Far away, down the deep and narrow chasm below the window, a brightly lighted taxicab came in a peculiar silence. It seemed to roll noiselessly down the deserted street, and red and green and yellow lights glittered upon it, and the white paint of its hood glowed brightly as it passed close by a street lamp. It came on, and maudlin song arose faintly from it. It sounded like a drunken group of revelers,

noved by some whim to invade the financial district at night.

It passed below and went on.

There was a muted whirring, the commissioner's grunted "Hello!" Then gruntings. He hung up the receiver.

"Their lookouts, most likely, n that taxi. They don't know we know about the leak, but hey're scouting, anyway."

There was the movement of other bodies in the room. Kathryn suddenly realized that there were probably four or five other men in there, silent and waiting. One of them snapped a lighter and shielded the flame with his hand while he puffed a cigar into a glow.

Kathryn caught a sudden glimpse of a curious collar about his neck. It was a telephone transmitter hung in place, and here were headphones over his ears. This was an office already fitted with several phones, evidently, which had been taken over for use as a temporary headquarters for the night.

"Er — hadn't we better . . ." began the commissioner uneasily.

"Shush," said Schaaf placidly. Lieutenant Hines told me how it should be done. Shush for awhile now."

Kathryn wanted to giggle. She felt very nervous and very much thrilled, and more than a little apprehensive; and her muscles were uncomfortably tense.

A man came out of the bank,

far below. He looked up the street and then went back inside again. The bank became black and blank and dark again.

"They expect der armored car," observed Schaaf. "Now we can haff a little smoke. You might tell them."

He was talking toward the back of the room. A man spoke quietly into a transmitter.

Kathryn gazed about and saw nothing. Schaaf felt the movement.

"Wait. Der performance will be intricate," he said, and chuckled.

A MINUTE. Two. Then there was a brittle little tinkling of glass somewhere. The scraping, musical sound of glass falling down the stone side of a building. Kathryn started.

"That's — that's a fire over there! It must be!"

Smoke was welling lazily out of a broken window in a building on the opposite side of the street and a half block away. A wavering reddish glow began to be visible behind it.

"To be sure," said Schaaf tranquilly. "It is an excellent effect."

He glanced once at it and stared down, looking far uptown and ignoring the gradual accumulation of a vast mass of whitish vapor curling up the sides of the buildings across the way. A second window broke with a second brittle tinkling,

A fresh billowing of smoke came out.

"Here is der armored car coming," said Schaaf.

A man spoke quietly into a transmitter. Kathryn looked down.

Far away, coming sturdily down the deserted street, one of the squat gray armored cars which carry valuables from place to place in New York was speeding noiselessly. Four motorcycle policemen ringed it about.

It swept up to the bank and stopped. One of the motorcycle policemen suddenly pointed upward. There was an intensification of the red glow back of the thick smoke. The motorcycle cop had stopped his machine. He now ran swiftly to the nearest corner and worked busily at a little signal box.

"Everything according to schedule," said Schaaf. "He is turning in der alarm."

A muted whirring. It was a telephone bell, muted. A man answered, and said quietly, "Two cars are coming down Church Street at forty miles an hour."

Kathryn felt a little electric thrill running over her. The commissioner stood up and came over to one of the windows, gazing down nervously.

Schaaf said meditatively, "I do not hear der engines. Tell der bank not to hurry. And tell them of der two cars."

A man murmured at the back of the room. Kathryn was star-

ing at the fire. The smoke coming out halfway up the building across the way was thick and dense, and the red glow behind it was fiercer. Then she heard a faint clatter and clanging.

"Hines," said Schaaf in her ear, "he is a smart man. He thinks that somewhere in der buildings all about there are men watching who can report by der telephones, and can signal that der beans are spilled. That is der reason for der verisimilitude."

The clanging and booting grew louder. Making a monstrous tumult, building up a tremendous uproar, fire engines came racing down the street. A steamer clanged to a stop and coupled swiftly to a hydrant. A hook-and-ladder came racing. A hose-tower after it.

The bank doors opened, and men made ready to come out.

AROUND THE corner of the nearest street two heavy cars came hurtling. A machine gun began to spit, and filled the canyonlike space between the tall buildings with a snarling uproar. Water geysered upward for an instant and swung sharply toward earth.

Kathryn, staring down, saw the four-inch stream from a hose strike the foremost car and crash in its windows like so much wet paper. Then, abruptly, the street and the lights and the armored car and all the puffing fire en-

gines ceased to exist. And at the same instant something flared intolerably overhead and the buildings on either side of the street for many blocks to north and south began to gleam brightly.

"Breston," said Schaaf, very calmly indeed, "he has turned on der dark. I guessed right about der probable height of der phenomenon. Now, we shoot der works!"

A river of darkness seemed to have filled the street below. A dull black substance seemed to have welled up instantly and to flow silently and without disturbance between the tall rows of buildings, as the Styx itself must flow between its banks. Flares, the huge magnesium torches that are used by aircraft for landing at night, were burning atop buildings for blocks on either hand.

From the motionless surface of the darkness the smoke and steam of the fire-engines coiled upward into the glare above. The fire which had been the excuse for calling the fire-engines had abruptly gone out, and the welling smoke from the windows had ceased. The watchers in the tenth-floor office looked down upon a surface of blackness imprisoned between the walls of office-buildings. And submerged in that abysmal dark there were men.

Dull, thudding concussions

sounded from below. Windows quivered.

"Bombs," said Schaaf calmly. "They were ready to smash open der armored car if they were too laff to nab der shipment before it got in. Now they use der bombs because they are scared. I will bet anybody that Breston is shaking in his shoes."

The horrible shrill scream of a man in agony came echoing cavernously from the impenetrable blackness below.

7

A MAN SPOKE quietly at the back of the office. "The bank doors are closed and the money's safe. They want to know if they can turn the juice into the doors."

"Himmell! Nol!" snapped Schaaf, as the commissioner rumbled an assent. "Firemen are sweeping der hoses all about. Do they want to electrocute them if a stream of water hits der doors?"

The commissioner bastily made his assent into a negative, and returned to his study of the incredible scene. The buildings rose out of nothingness, and their sides were apparently incandescent from the flames burning above.

Down there under the surface of the blackness, the fire-engines swept their streams of water to right and left and up and down. They were working blindly, of

course, but whatever those streams of water struck would go down. Plate-glass, cars, men.

"Verdamml!" said Schaaf presently, though without dismay. "Hines is a smart man. He dog't take chances. We were hoping, Miss Bush, that a stream of water would smash into der car where Breston had his apparatus working. If it got into der coils it would short-circuit them and der apparatus would work no longer. We could take a look at *die Schweine* then. But der engines are still working, judging by der steam that comes up, and still der darkness holds. Hm — Ah, bere comes der first flare down."

A ball of fire, incredibly white and unbelievably fierce, descended before Kathryn's eyes. It was swinging down swiftly by a dangling steel cable. It went down in swift swoops of fifteen and twenty feet at a time.

"A magnesium flare," said Schaaf softly. "It has half a million candlepower. We try him on der dog. Ha!"

The flare reached the definite surface of the blackness. It seemed incredible that no glitter came from that surface. It dived into the flood of darkness. Its white light turned to red. Down and down — Fifteen feet in the black flood and it could be seen as a dully glowing red ball, no more.

"No more flares," said Schaaf quietly over his shoulder. "They

don't work. Der darkness absorbs all der light. But keep der other flares going on der roofs. Now we try."

A voice spoke quietly from the row of telephone instruments.

"Lieutenant Hines reports that the street is full of gas. Sneeze-gas."

"No. 3 expedient gone to hell," said Schaaf calmly. "We hoped from der water, and we hoped from der flares. And we had sneeze-gas and tear gas bombs ready to smash in der street. But they intended to use it themselves to disable der armored-car crew and der bank people, I suppose, and they must haff masks. It is der deffil that Breston got so much money two weeks ago. He has capital to supply his friends with all modern improvements. Hm. All right. Tell that fire-eater Hines to get ready to go out with his mopping-up party and raise hell. Set der gongs going."

A man spoke quietly at the back of the room, and to the chatter and chuffing of engines in the street there now was added the heavy, measured clanging of monster gongs. The engines shut off abruptly.

"Der gongs are signals," said Schaaf quietly. "It is Hines's idea. They signal to der firemen to cut off der water, and he and his gang go out hand and hand to sweep der street and grab anybody that has not a rubber

suit on and smash him behind der ear. He and all his men are ex-soldiers, and they pretend it is a patrol between trenches. Also, der gongs keep them oriented so they know which way is which. Those motorcycle cops had orders to duck in der armored car if der darkness fell. I hope they remembered, or somebody is likely to sock them in der jaw."

THE COMMISSIONER growled from the next window. There had been a sudden silence. The firemen had fumbled their way to their engines and climbed up on them. The street below should be empty of all living creatures except Lefty Dunn and his gangsters, desperate and at bay, and the sinister figure of the man who, allied with the underworld, seemed to have had the city at his mercy. Shots sounded suddenly from below.

"Somebody is going to get scared now," said Schaaf. "Herr Commissioner, our Lieutenant Hines is out and fighting like der deffil. Der gentlemen for whom we are gifting this party will try to run away now. If you will gif orders . . ."

"I've got a cordon all about the darkness," growled the commissioner.

"Der idea is," said Schaaf patiently, "that Preston has not a full-power darkness-producing outfit with him, or else maybe

der water got to some of his batteries and cut down his power. He can't drife a car in der darkness. He will try to walk, carrying that suitcase apparatus with him. Tip off der cordon of Reserfs to leave one man at ebery corner, especially der corners where there are police telephones. Maybe they can tip us exactly where he arrives."

The commissioner coughed, and swore privately to himself for not having issued the orders on his own initiative. He gave them.

"That, also, was Hines' idea," said Schaaf placidly.

He looked at his watch in the glare that came in the window. Another shot below. Three more. A shriek.

"It should be sunrise in half an hour more, maybe less," he observed. "I hope der verdamm't fool is caught before der people try to come down this way to work. Otherwise we will haff to stop der subways."

He looked sharply at the girl beside him. She was shaking peculiarly. Her lips were caught between her teeth and her eyes glistened suspiciously.

"Shush!" said Schaaf in her ear. "I know. I am scared to der bottom of my marrow, too, but that fighting fool Hines is all right. He has to be! And if you cry now, I will tell him about it afterward! That is a threat! Shush!"

She caught her breath, strug-

gling to fight down sobs of nervousness.

A man said briskly from the row of telephones, "The cordon, sir, reports that the blackness is moving. It's moving on down town. It is three blocks long and three wide, and it has moved half a block south."

Schaaf grimaced, and then grinned.

"Haff somebody yell that out in der street to Hines. He will know what to do. Are members of der cordon posting themselves in der high buildings and smashing in doors to get at telephones so they can watch der darkness and tell us? I suspect Preston will switch it off for an instant to try and see where he is, after he mofes a block or two."

A man spoke briskly into a telephone. And Schaaf said pleasantly, "Hines eben thought of that, in case all der other things did not work. I told him he was a pessimist, but I admit now that he is smart."

Silence. There were no more shots. The lights flared brilliantly outside. One dimmed, and another took its place. The unwavering, opaque blackness below — it was almost impossible to look at it without believing that it was a solid substance — seemed to flow noiselessly like a river of death between the starkly illuminated buildings on either side. But Schaaf said suddenly, "It is going down! He has

mofed a block or more with his apparatus!"

KATHRYN STARED. The upper limit of the blackness had receded. It was hardly more than three stories above the street, now. As she watched, very, very slowly it went down still more.

"He is going south. On foot," said Schaaf, "as Hines predicted."

Five minutes later the street itself was dimly visible. The street-lights appeared as dull red glows, which grew brighter and turned white. The squat gray armored car appeared. There were two figures moving spasmodically on the pavement beside it. The darkness drew on toward the south. Two more figures, crumpled up and still. A car, sluiced around with its windows smashed and the hood torn off its engine by the force of a stream of water. Minutes later another car appeared dimly as the darkness became merely murkiness. It, too, was washed clear of windows.

"I bet," said Schaaf intently, "Breston almost got caught by a stream of water, and hid behind his car for protection from der hoses until they were turned off."

"Is — is he safe?" asked Kathryn in a strained voice. She was not, now gathered, asking about Preston.

One of the men at the tele-

phones said quietly, "Lieutenant Hines asked just now for the position of the center of the darkness. I gave it to him from the reports of the cordon around its outer edge."

Kathryn gasped in relief.

One of the other men at the telephones said swiftly, "Report. The darkness was turned out for about two seconds. Preston was seen, carrying two heavy suitcases and staring about him. There were two other men with him. Lieutenant Hines fired on them and saw one of them fall."

Silence. Looking down from the windows now, the street was clear. But to the south the darkness rose from the pavement and filled the space between the buildings.

"It seems cruel," said Schaaf gently, "for all der whole police force to be hunting down three men as if they were mad dogs. But they are mad dogs. Der newspapers did not print all der crimes that happened on Fifth Avenue the other day. They could not. And Breston permitted those crimes deliberately. He arranged to turn der underworld loose for a share in der profits. He got that share. And he will do it again if we do not catch him."

The commissioner coughed, and said suddenly, "See if the gas has cleared down in the street enough for us to go down."

A quiet inquiry.

"It is reasonably safe, sir."

The commissioner strode to the door. Kathryn looked appealingly at Schaaf.

"Surely," he said comfortably. "It is working like a well-oiled clock. We go down and follow der darkness, and maybe we see Hines, eh?"

The elevator was brightly lighted, now, and descended with a cheery hum. And the street was bright, though it was a ghastly brightness. They emerged to the sidewalk. An ambulance clanged up and stopped. Men had come out of the armored car and were bending over the writhing figures beside it.

"Sneeze-gas," said Schaaf quietly, "it is terrible. It produces a horrible exhaustion. But it is not fatal."

The still figures a little distance off were gangsters, with gas-masks adjusted in marked incongruity to their loudly checked and now soaked and dragged clothing. Uniformed figures were moving about, investigating. The firemen were cheerfully coiling up their hose and preparing a return trip to their engine-houses. Two more bodies of gangsters. A man in a rubber suit — one of Hines's men. Twenty yards on, another gangster.

THERE WERE seven gangsters and two police in the space of a block. Beyond that the pavement was blessedly bare. Schaaf

looked to the east at the first side-street.

"Der sky is lightening. Day will soon be here," he said quietly. "I think we get Breston."

They walked quietly after the slowly moving mass of darkness. On the ground-level, here, it looked vastly different. It rose in an irregular, clumsy curve. Seen from behind it looked oddly like some monstrous, prehistoric monster edging itself painfully down a canon whose walls closed tightly upon its sides.

Four blocks down they found two policemen carrying off a figure on a litter.

"Lefty Dunn, sir," said one of them, satisfiedly. "Lieutenant Hines shot him, sir. He's dead."

Two blocks further a policeman was beaming as he inserted his key into the police telephone box.

"Just taking up cordon work here, sir," he reported happily. "The darkness is dwindling fast. It's hardly more than two blocks long and wide, sir."

"His batteries are running low," observed Schaaf. "Soon he is in der soup."

They hurried a little, now. It seemed as if the two fleeing men were guiding themselves by the trolley-tracks and could make better time in the horrible darkness all about them. A little farther on there was a clatter and clanging, and a chemical engine appeared where a policeman was playing a hand fire-extinguisher

on the awning of a corner cigar store.

"Ah," said Schaaf pleasantly. "They are getting desperate. They tried to make a diversion by starting a fire. That is foolishness. It only adds arson to der charges of robbery and murder."

The cigar store was at the corner of Wall Street, and Trinity churchyard showed a certain duskiness at its southern edge, but that was all.

And five minutes later they were able to view the darkness as a whole. It had moved out into the clear space which is Battery Park. The flagpole of the Aquarium rose above it. It was a circular, flattened mass of black with ragged, hazy edges. It stood like some monstrosity in the mass of green things. It was hardly more than two hundred feet in diameter, and it was certainly not thirty feet high. And it seemed to be still dwindling slowly.

Hines came up, with sweat-streaks on his face and powder-marks on his hands. He was wrapping his handkerchief around one wrist, which was bleeding.

"Cut it," he said quietly, "breaking in a door to get at a telephone booth. I called up Governor's Island, sir," he added to the commissioner of police. "They have some army planes there."

The sky was getting lighter

and lighter. The harbor spread out as a lucent gray, and ships at anchor began to take definite shapes through the morning air. The Statue of Liberty rose gray and misty from its base.

The ominous mass of blackness was the only incongruous thing in the whole spectacle of the sunrise. That pancake of malevolent darkness was still, clinging to the outer edge of the park, with nearly half its diameter spreading out over the waves of the harbor. A sudden chugging arose. The blackness began to move. It swept out over the water, moving steadily and doggedly.

"Himmel!" snapped Schaaf, his mouth dropped open. "They found a launch! Breston will make for der Jersey shore and land, and der Jersey police cannot make a cordon in time to stop him from landing and hiding himself."

"Don't worry," said Hines grimly. "Look there!"

A LITTLE dark speck detached itself from the earth of Governor's Island. It rose and rose, and a dull muttering drew nearer and nearer. The noise rose to a roar, and an army biplane swept above the moving monstrosity of blackness. It circled and swooped.

Something dropped. There was a heavy concussion, a vast and crackling detonation.

And then there was abruptly

nothing upon the water, anywhere, except a spouting mass of spray and smoke, and a few remnants of a boat that swirled about and sank as the plume of spray subsided. The blackness had gone out like a blown-out candle.

"Good shooting," said Schaaf comfortably. "That must have been a big bomb. Now we will have der hunt for der fragments of Breston's apparatus, and we will find that we can't do a damned thing with them. Which, from der scientific standpoint, is a very great pity."

Hines unconsciously brushed his hands together.

"It's finished," he said, suddenly very tired.

The commissioner of police coughed. He was a civilian, and he had been a political appointee, and he had been learning of late that the force is much more important than politics. It was not altogether a pleasant dose he had swallowed. But he turned abruptly to Hines.

"Inspector Hines," he said, and coughed again, "I—er—I may not have co-operated with you as fully as I should when you first reported this matter; but—er—in the future you will find no cause for complaint. Come in to see me tomorrow."

He moved abruptly away. Hines stared after him.

"Inspector?" Kathryn gasped. "Yes," said Schaaf placidly.

"Inspector Hines. The commissioner is like Napoleon in his promotions. Yes. All of us have our Napoleonic moments, and he did this very nicely. You are Police Inspector Hines hereafter, and I congratulate you. And I think, Miss Bush, that as a very good friend of his, if I were you I would take der moment of congratulation as an opportunity to kiss him. It would be appropri-

ate, and it might not be unpleasant."

Kathryn swallowed something. Hines flushed a little. "You've got your scoop," Hines said awkwardly, ignoring Schaaf, "and this time there is nothing to regret about it."

"I—I don't care!" said Kathryn firmly. "About the scoop, that is. It doesn't matter. But I am going to kiss you." And she did.

BOOKS

DEEP WATERS

by William Hope Hodgson

Arkham House: Publishers, Sauk City, Wisconsin, 53583; 1967; 300pp plus foreword by August Derleth; dust jacket by Frank Utpatel; \$5.00.

Contents: *The Sea Horses*, *The Derelict*, *The Thing in the Woods*, *From the Tideless Sea*, *The Island of the U'd*, *The Voice in the Night*, *The Adventure of the Hearland*, *The Mystery of the Derelict*, *The Sham-raken Homeward-Bounder*, *The Stone Ship*, *The Crew of the Lancing*, *The Hobbitants of Muddle Islet*, & *The Call in the Dawn*.

Here are thirteen short stories by an author who has long been regarded by both enthusiasts of fantastic fiction and mainstream critics as one of the finest writers of gripping sea stories. These, Mr. Derleth tells us, are "... all Hodgson's short-

er macabre tales of the sea, . . . and three of them have never appeared before in any collection. Two will be familiar: *The Derelict* and *The Voice in the Night* have long been good for a shudder; and of the others, all but two are accounts of the weird and the terrible.

Having had time to read (or reread) only the first six, I can report that, for me, these make the volume a "must buy"; and reading them inspires faith that the author will not let me down badly with the other seven. They are not for continuous reading, as there are similarities which can have a momentarily spoiling effect if you come across one in two successive stories.

I would particularly warn the reader not to read *From the Tideless Sea*, directly after *The Thing in the Woods*—but do read *The Thing in the Woods* before the latter story. This strikes me as being faulty arrangement, the only complaint I have, or expect to have about the volume. RAWL.

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the cauldron

AS OF THIS moment (March 13), your comments on our Spring issue indicate that the debate on previously-unpublished stories by Robert E. Howard, which started when we ran *Valley of the Lost* in the Summer 1966 issue of **MAGAZINE OF HORROR** (under the impression that this was the story which had been scheduled for the 8th issue of **STRANGE TALES**, an issue which never appeared) is spilling over to **STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES**. This shows that REH's stories are still capable of arousing extreme reactions of admiration and dislike.

Howard was a full-time pulp story author, which meant that he wrote continuously, whether he was "inspired" or not. He had achieved his own particular technique of story construction and presentation, and by the 30's had arrived at that state where he could manipulate the various elements of his style and thought and feeling so that a story would be readable (and perhaps quite enjoyable) to the person who was encountering the author for the first time but was routine to the experienced follower of REH's tales. And some were just routine and nothing more, in that the person who had

heard how excellent Howard was, and picked up this story, would wonder what the enthusiasm for the author was all about. I remember very well that the first four Howard stories I ever read struck me forcefully: *The Gods of Bal-Sagoth*, *The Dark Man*, *The Black Stone*, and *The Thing on the Roof*, but the fifth, *The Horror From the Mound*, was a distinct let-down. It was roundly denounced by numerous readers in *The Eyrie* (*WEIRD TALES'* letter department), yet a few others were enthusiastic — they were the newcomers. But the next story, the last Solomon Kane tale to appear in *WT*, *Wings in the Night* satisfied me that I had not grown tired of Howard, nor had he lost his skill entirely. In the years that followed, I would encounter various tales (Conan stories among them) which had little appeal, but a plurality held up, even when some of the elements had become quite familiar to me. And then came the time when I decided that I'd had enough, and it was not until many years later — until the Howard revival started with the publication of stories located and "finished" or slightly reworked by L. Sprague de Camp, and the Gnome Press collec-

tions began to appear — that I found REH interesting again.

Some of the loudest anti-Howard voices I hear these days, in your letters, are from readers who are in this "had enough" period (which may or may not be permanent; time alone will tell that). These are the readers who found REH fascinating a few years ago, but now feel that they have grown beyond him. They are almost insulted by being asked to read him now.

Others still like REH but do not care for the particular story at hand. And still others are delighted. As things stand thus far, my records show that the happy readers outnumber the displeased ones by a very considerable margin, but those "dislike" votes suggest that *Secret of Lost Valley* will not win or place; however, all the returns are not in yet, and at the last moment the appreciative votes brought the Conan story in our Spring MAGAZINE OF HORROR (which had been wavering between third and fourth place a week before the polls closed) up to second place. So *The Reckoning* (which is done at least a month later than these preliminary remarks) may show something quite different than today's score sheet.

Solar Pons is also controversial. Right now, *The Tottenham Werewolf* shows more first-place votes than any other story in the issue, partly because so many of you who rated Jules de Grandin outstanding this time put Solar Pons in the ordinary number one position.

Some of you object to stories which are not "weird" in the sense that the weird-seeming events turn out to have a "natural" (if somewhat bizarre) explanation. This is something I need more votes upon. As I have explained before, if all the stories dealt with the supernatural (since we use an occasional science-fiction type mystery tale) then there is going to be a sameness about the magazine, de-

spite my earnest attempts to give you a wide variety. While if you realize that some stories may not be super-normal at all, then there is a slight element of suspense (unless you are one of those persons who peek at endings first, in which case you deserve what you get). My aim is to give you stories, each of which is, in some sense, unusual, eerie, or strange (and perhaps more than one of these three elements). Being imperfect I may fail completely on this or that item once in a while; but the question now is how you want me to try in the first place. If you really want the non-supernatural tale banished from our pages, I'm open to conviction, but I need to hear many different voices saying this before I will be convinced.

Mervin Jones writes from Los Angeles: "Considering your great attention to detail in the matter of minutiae in the history of published weird stories, I am surprised at the lack of concern shown in the Winter issue of STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES about the accuracy of personal reminiscences about the film history of Gaston Leroux's *Phantom of the Opera*. The novel has seen three translations to film: one with Chaney, one with Claude Rains, and one with Herbert Lion. The second 'talking' version starring Lon Chaney, to which you refer as a separate film, was in reality merely a re-issue of the first, made in 1925. The film was re-edited and a few scenes with Norman Kerry and Mary Philbin were re-shot with dialogue, so the film is officially a 'part-talkie' — one of that strange hybrid of film during the transition period which was basically a silent film with short sound passages. (These were usually films started as silents and finished as talkies; even *The Jazz Singer* had only a few minutes of actual synchronized dialogue and song in an otherwise silent picture.) The 'talkie' re-issue of *Phantom of the*

Opera included an operatic aria dubbed for Mary Philbin and another singer and a voice supposedly that of the phantom, which was not recorded by Lon Chaney — his only talkie was the re-make (not re-issue) of *The Unholy Three*, and it is thought that his work on this film greatly irritated the throat condition which soon after caused his death.

"Film history, as, I suppose, any other branch of history, is frequently confused by personal reminiscences of questionable accuracy being recorded as fact; so as I would refrain from making statements about so-and-so's illustration on the cover of the September 1938 issue of *WIGWAG TALKIES*, I would appreciate your being a little more careful of how you discuss non-existent re-makes of old films. (I'm just kidding, really — I doubt if you so severely clouded the pages of film history, but do, please watch it.)"

We shall, Friend Jones, I do remember those "part-talkies" though, and of the ones I saw found only *Phantom* satisfactory. One sound-but-no-dialogue film I still recall as highly effective was the Emil Jannings version of *The Patriot*, where Jannings played the mad czar Paul I, and Lewis Stone was his friend and assassin, Count Pahlen. Am I right in recalling that we heard the sound of muskets, possibly bells and (surely this cannot be imaginary!) the supposed voice of the czar croaking "Pahlen, Pahlen" when he had nightmares, and at the end when he is about to be murdered?

Pfc Kenneth McDaniel writes from Vietnam: "My chief complaint is the non-representation of many of the best writers in any of your three magazines. . . (1) Catherine Moore (the only three short stories of hers I have been able to obtain are in the out-of-print *AVON FANTASY READERS*);

Coming Next Issue MY LADY OF THE TUNNEL

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tale you have
asked for
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Did You Miss These Back Issues Of MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#1, August 1963: *The Man With a Thousand Legs*, Frank Belknap Long; *A Thing of Beauty*, Wallace West; *The Yellow Sign*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Maze and the Monster*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Death of Halpin Frayer*, Ambrose Bierce; *Babylon*, W. M. Donald A. Wellheim; *The Inexperienced Ghost*, H. G. Wells; *The Unbeliever*, Robert Silverberg; *Fidel Basin*, W. J. Stammer; *The Last Dawn*, Frank Lillie Pollock; *The Undying Head*, Mark Twain.

#2, November 1963: *The Space-Eaters*, Frank Belknap Long; *The Faceless Thing*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Red Room*, H. G. Wells; *Hungary's Female Vampire*, Dean Lipton; *A Tough Tussle*, Ambrose Bierce; *Doorslammer*, Donald A. Wellheim; *The Electric Chair*, George Wright; *The Other One*, Jerry L. Keane; *The Chatterer*, Archie Binns; *Clarissa*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*, Rudyard Kipling.

Order From Page 128

Coming Next Issue

DEATH FROM
WITHIN

as strange and
different tale
of terror

by Sterling S. Kramer

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#3. Feb. 1964: Out of print.

#4 Sept. 1964: Out of print.

#5, September 1964: *Cassius*, Henry S. Whitehead; *Love at First Sight*, J. L. Miller; *Five-Year Contract*, J. Vernon Shea; *The House of the Worm*, Merle Prout; *The Beautiful Suit*, H. G. Wells; *A Stranger Came to Reap*, Stephen Dentinger; *The Morn'ing the Birds Forgot to Sing*, Walt Liebscher; *Bones*, Donald A. Wohlheim; *The Ghostly Rental*, Henry James.

#6, November 1964: *Caverns of Horror*, Laurence Manning; *Prodigy*, Walt Liebscher; *The Mask*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Life-After-Death of Mr. Thaddeus Warde*, Robert Barbour Johnson; *The Feminine Fraction*, David Grinnell; *Dr. Heldegger's Experiment*, Nathaniel Hawthorne; *The Pacer*, August Derleth; *The Moth*, H. G. Wells; *The Door to Saturn*, Clark Ashton Smith.

Order From Page 128

(2) Maurice Level (published in the 1920 *Tales of Mystery and Horror*, which is extremely unavailable); (3) Nicotin Dyalhis (again, I have been only able to find three of his stories of about eight he had published in *Weird Tales*; I can't imagine why Derleth doesn't collect these when so many less deserving authors are getting their second-rate stories collected by Arkham); (4) Frank Owen; (5) Robert E. Howard stories that do not concern Conan or Solomon Kane; (6) more of the Paul Ernst 'Dr. Satan' stories; (7) the non-de Grandin Seabury Quinn stories, such as the already-recognized *Cloth of Madness* and *The Green God's Ring*, the latter being an old WT representation; also at least one story in the Thomas E. Carter series. The de Grandin stories are just too slick. They are very readable — quickly and with very little concentration and a very predictable level of enjoyment . . . Never terrible, never excellent. I would hate to think they will become a once-every-issue institution with your magazine. . . .

You'll find *Night and Silence*, by Maurice Level in the Summer issue of *MAGAZINE OF HORROR* (#16). We run two Solomon Kane stories in MOH taken from the first Arkham House Howard collection now out of print, and many readers have pleaded for some of the S. K. tales which have never been reprinted — while, obviously from the comments we made at the beginning of this department, a number of others would prefer that we give REH revivals a vacation. The *Cloth of Madness* appeared in the August 1965 issue of MOH (#10) and *The Green God's Ring* is listed as a de Grandin story (WT, January 1945). So far as I know, there was only one Thomas E. Carter story published, *The Web of Living Death*, *WEIRD TALES*, February 1933. Editor Farnsworth Wright announced this as the starter in a new series, but

either Mr. Quinn did not write any subsequent Carter tales, or Mr. Wright was not satisfied with them; in any event I never heard of any further ones being published. I'll see what can be done about the other requests and have hopes of fulfilling some of them, at least.

Charles Hixley, who thought little of the Howard and Solar Pons stories in our fourth issue, writes: 'I've given up all hope — and desire — of getting 'with it' — 'it' being the consensus of opinion. How the aggregate voting readership could drop Dickens to bottom rank surpasses all of my quota of understanding. It was superbly written and had an eerie, punch ending. . . .

'It's about time that Quinn got hors de concours for each issue (since you obviously plan to exploit this wonderful mother lode) so that the voting set-up could shape up a little more equably. It's damned hard for a superb short story to compete with a long-short that is, in effect, the 27th chapter of a marvellous Edda with engaging protagonists. (I hope you convey to Mr. Quinn the holding power his yarns exert after 40 years — and all that means in world change.) . . .

'Surprises and novelties are my delight, and the three shorts in this, the best issue of SM45 to date, interested me most, with Rousseau's almost documentary approach to Spiritualists the topper. I'm so glad you've brought up *The Surgeon of Souls* series, as I've been wanting to plead for same. I have only the last one and have been holding out for years hoping to get the group. Alas! Cooke's outre little chiller or threatened to be one of those awful Bisset Morgan jungle epics of transplanted brains, etc., and so charmingly 'disappointed'. My moldy records indicate that he wrote four others for WT and I'd appreciate seeing them in one of our three. And who would have thought H. G. Wells

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#7, January 1965: *The Thing From — Outside*, George Allan England; *Black Thing at Midnight*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Shadows on the Wall*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *The Phantom Farmhouse*, Seabury Quinn; *The Ohlong Box*, Edgar Allan Poe; *A Way With Kids*, Ed M. Clinton; *The Devil of the Marsh*, E. B. Marriott-Watson; *The Shuttered Room*, H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth.

#8, April 1965: *The Black Laugh*, William J. Makin; *The Hand of Glory*, R. H. D. Barham; *The Garrison*, David Grinnell; *Passer*, Robert W. Chambers; *The Lady of the Velvet Collar*, Washington Irving; *Jack*, Reynold Junker; *The Burglar-Proof Vault*, Oliver Taylor; *The Dead Who Walk*, Ray Cummings.

#9, June 1965: *The Night Wire*, H. F. Arnold; *Sacrilege*, Wallace West; *All the Stain of Long Delight*, Jerome Clark; *Skulls in the Stars*, Robert E. Howard; *The Photographs*, Richard Marsh; *The Distortion out of Space*, Francis Flagg; *Guarantee Period*, William M. Danner; *The Door in the Wall*, H. G. Wells; *The Three Low Masses*, Alphonse Daudet; *The Whistling Room*, William Hope Hodgson.

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Coming Next Issue

Jules de Grandin in

THE DRUID'S SHADOW

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#10, August 1965: *The Girl at Heddon's*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Torture of Hope*, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam; *The Cloth of Madness*, Seabury Quinn; *The Tree*, Gerald W. Page; *In the Court of the Dragon*, Robert W. Chambers; *Placide's Wife*, Kirk Mashburn; *Come Closer*, Joanna Russ; *The Plague of the Living Dead*, A. Hyatt Verrill.

#11, November 1965: *The Empy Zoo*, Edward D. Hoch; *A Psychological Shipwreck*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Call of the Meek-Men*, Laurence Manning; *Was It a Dream?*, Guy de Maupassant; *Under the Han Tree*, Katherine Yates; *The Head of Du Bois*, Dorothy Norman Cooke; *The Dweller in Dark Valley*, (verse), Robert E. Howard; *The Devil's Pool*, Greye la Spina.

#12, Winter 1965/66: *The Faceless God*, Robert Bloch; *Master Nicholas*, Seabury Quinn; *But Not the Herald*, Roger Zelazny; *Dr. Muncing*, Exoreist; *Gordon MacCreagh*; *The Affair at 7 Rue de M. John Steinbeck*; *The Man in the Dark*, Irwin Ross; *The Abyss*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *Destination* (verse), Robert E. Howard; *Memoirs of HPL*, Muriel E. Eddy; *The Eltek Beast*, Henry S. Whitehead.

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Coming Next Issue
AIM FOR PERFECTION

by Beverly Haef

had a sense of humor? Perhaps this *Temptation* will be too 'in' for the lay public, but it hit this painter's puss like a cream pie. And fun can be so uncomfortable in fantasy! Good show!"

Well, I could be mistaken, but I do think that a superb short story could nose out Jules de Grandin (or at least tie with him for first place) if enough readers agreed with you that it was superb. After all, de Grandin did not always come out first in the old *WEIRD TALES* and (I'd have to check on this, of course) I have the feeling that, at times, he was bested by other than the then-favorite contenders. To answer both you and Reader McDaniel in relation to de Grandin: we intend to work that "wonderful mother lode" as you term it, but do not guarantee to have de Grandin in each and every issue of SMS for the rest of its (or the editor's) life, whichever is shorter. But we will give you a good solid run before we start to switch around, as it were, watching how the readers take this continuous exposure.

Mike Ashley writing from Kent, England, is enthusiastic about the Howard story. "... It's the best story I've ever read by him, beats any Conan I've ever read, and even the few Kane I've had the pleasure of encountering (the two in MOH in fact). ... A Howard story can always be told distinct from a Lovecraft or a Keller or a Quinn, and when it comes to creating a sense of horrific awe, Howard outwits them all. Lovecraft is the expert at describing the indescribable, but Howard—and he shows it expressly in this short—can and does go one step farther by letting the indescribable describe itself.

"So GHOST STORIES did contain some good stuff. If *Mediums for Justice* is anything to go by, then please reprint more from this magazine. ...

The Tottenham Werewolf ... is the first Solar Pons story I've ever read, but I'd love to read more. Deleth really expertly catches the Holmesian atmosphere in every respect. Some time ago the BBC here screened several of the original Holmes stories, with a really masterful Holmes and Watson. What I'd like to see now is a similar transmutation with Pons and Parker.

"The Wells story I'd not seen before. In fact, I'd never heard of it before, even though I'd thought I knew all of his short fiction by now. Pity you didn't mention when it first appeared. A worthy short, though not typical of Wells. It didn't quite read like some of his famous pieces like *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*, *The Door in the Wall*, or *The Flowering of the Strange Orchid*."

The Temptation of Harringay is from the collection of Wells' short stories entitled *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents* (the volume in which the "Orchid" story also appears). Readers of the day found the title story in this volume highly amusing and it's related that Frank Harris got Wells on to the track of his first real success by asking him "Why (various expletives deleted) don't you write funny stories about science?"

Wells had a reputation as a first-class conversational humorist and there is a quiet humor in many of his short stories, not all of which are science fiction or fantasy.

Lothar McKinstry who has nothing but praise for Solar Pons and Jules de Grandin writes from Bloomburg, Penna., about other items: "The first Simon Ark tale was very good, but the second hardly worthy to be included in your magazine. To me it seemed as if the *Witch is Dead* had no supernatural background whatsoever, just the mysterious Simon Ark."

"As for the Doctor Satin saga, how about running a series of them?"

Did You Miss These

Back Issues Of
MAGAZINE OF HORROR?

#13, Summer 1966: *The Thing in the House*, H. F. Scotten; *Divine Madness*, Roger Zelazny; *Valley of the Lost*, Robert E. Howard; *Heredit*, David H. Keller; *Dwelling of the Righteous*, Anna Hunger; *Almost Immortal*, Austin Hall.

#14, Winter 1966/67: *The Lair of Star-Spawn*, Derleth & Scherer; *The Vacant Lot*, Mary Wilkins-Freeman; *Proof*, S. Fowler Wright; *Comes Now the Power*, Roger Zelazny; *The Moth Message*, Laurence Manning; *The Friendly Demon*, Daniel DeFoe; *Dark Hollow*, Emil Petaja; *An Inhabitant of Carcosa*, Ambrose Bierce; *The Monster-God of Mamurth*, Edmond Hamilton.

#15, Spring 1967: *The Room of Shadows*, Arthur J. Burks; *Lilies*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Flaw*, J. Vernon Shea; *The Doom of London*, Robert Barr; *The Vale of Lost Women*, Robert E. Howard; *The Ghoul Gallery*, Hugh B. Cave.

#16, Summer 1967: *Night and Silence*, Maurice Level; *Lazarus*, Leonid Andreyeff; *Mr. Osburn*, Joseph Payne Brennan; *The Dog That Laughed*, Charles Willard Diffin; *Ah, Sweet Youth*, Pauline Kappel Priluck; *The Man Who Never Was*, R. A. Lafferty; *The Loden Ring*, S. Baring-Gould; *The Monster of the Prophecy*, Clark Ashton Smith.

Order From Page 128

Next to Jules de Grandin, Asot Keane is the best occult sleuth I've seen in a long time. He is rivaled only by the latter and perhaps Nayland Smith or James Holm. (James Holm, as many pulp fans know, was the detective who pursued the infamous Doctor Death through three issues of the Doctor's own magazine, until the mag faded into oblivion.)

"The Door of Doom" by Hugh B. Cave was the greatest mystery and suspense tale I have ever read. Why not publish one of his later tales like *Half Way to Hell*, which he did for *STRANGE DETECTIVE STORIES* magazine before it folded? (The story was in the December 1933 issue.)

"Speaking of *STRANGE DETECTIVE STORIES* why don't you publish one of the Sacred Symbols, Inc. tales that Arthur J. Burks wrote for it? In my opinion, *Dragon's Gate* was the best of the series. I read it before but then sold the copy.

"In conclusion, your magazine is indeed a 'light for sore eyes' to fans of the once-great pulp era. Thank you."

You're welcome, Friend McKinstry! As you can see in our introductory comments, this time, we're putting the question of whether we should continue to include a leaves of non-supernatural stories in SMS, of which *The Witch Is Dead* and *The Inn of Terror* are both examples.

Due to the kindness of Glenn Lord, I am having the opportunity to examine an issue of the old *STRANGE DETECTIVE STORIES* which I did not encounter at the time it was being published. It does not include either of the items you mention, however, so I can only say that I would need the assistance of readers who have such issues and would be willing to loan them to me.

Dr. Satan seems to have made a hit with you, the readers, so we shall see if we can bring you more in this series. RAWL

Did You Miss These Issues Of STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES

#1, Summer 1966: *Village of the Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *House of the Hatchet*, Robert Bloch; *The Off-Season*, Gerald W. Page; *The Tell-Tale Heart*, Edgar Allan Poe; *The Lurking Fear*, H. P. Lovecraft; *The Awful Injustice*, S. B. H. Hurst; *Ferguson's Capsules*, August Derleth; *The Mansion of Unholy Magic*, Seabury Quinn.

#2, Fall 1966: *The House of Horror*, Seabury Quinn; *The Men in Black*, John Brunner; *The Strange Case of Pascal*, Roger Eugene Ulmer; *The Witch Is Dead*, Edward D. Hoch; *The Secret of the City*, Terry Carr and Ted White; *The Street* (verse), Robert W. Lowndes; *The Seagorge of B'Moth*, Betram Russell.

#3, Winter 1966/67: *The Inn of Terror*, Gaston Leroux; *The Other*, Robert A. W. Lowndes; *The Door of Doom*, Hugh B. Cave; *A Matter of Breeding*, Ralph Hayes; *Emeralds*, Rama Wells; *The Trial for Murder*, Chas. Dickens & Chas. Collins; *The Blood-Flower*, Seabury Quinn.

#4, Spring 1967: *The Tottenham Werewolf*, by August Derleth; *The Secret Of Lost Valley*, by Robert E. Howard; *Medium For Justice*, by Victor Rousseau; *Si Urug Of The Tail*, by Oscar Cook; *The Temptation of Harrington*, by H. G. Wells; *The Tensile of Broussac*, by Seabury Quinn.

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TALES OF WONDER - OLD AND NEW!

#1, Winter 1966/67: *The Girl in the Golden Atom*, Ray Cummings; *The City of Singing Flame*, Clark Ashton Smith; *Voice of Atlantis*, Laurence Manning; *The Plague*, George H. Smith; *The Question*, J. Hunter Holly.

#2, Spring 1967: *The Moon Menace*, Edmond Hamilton; *Dust*, Wallace West; *The White City*, David H. Keller, M.D.; *Ringhost*, A. Bertram Chandler; *Seeds From Space*, Laurence Manning.

#3, Summer 1967: *Beyond the Singing Flame*, Clark Ashton Smith; *Disowned*, Victor Enders-Smith; *A Single Rose*, Jon DeCies; *The Last American*, J. A. Mitchell; *The Man Who Awoke*, Laurence Manning.



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THE GODS OF EAST AND WEST

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

A GAME OF CHESS

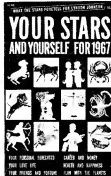
THE MAN FROM NOWHERE

THE DARKNESS ON FIFTH AVENUE

THE COUNCIL and THE HOUSE (verse)

Did you like the cover? Yes No

(Note: A number of you have urged that we include verse on the ballot when we run it; it seemed only fair that the editor should be the first to stick his neck out.)



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